

**AN ANALYSIS OF THE COMPREHENSION INSTRUCTION AND READING  
COMPREHENSION AND VOCABULARY STRATEGIES USED BY TEACHERS  
TO FACILITATE STUDENTS' ABILITY TO UNDERSTAND TEXT**

A Dissertation

by

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## **ABSTRACT**

The primary purpose of this mixed methods study was to identify the amount of time teachers spent implementing reading comprehension and vocabulary instruction to facilitate students' comprehension of texts. Observations and interviews were used for this study. The observations supplied valuable data to address the research questions guiding this study:

1) What is the amount and percent of instructional time that teachers spend implementing reading comprehension instructional strategies during 7<sup>th</sup> grade English Language Arts/Reading (ELA/R) and social studies (SS) instruction?; 2) Is there a difference between the amount of time ELA/R and SS teachers implement comprehension instructional practices?; 3) Is there a difference between the amount of time beginner and seasoned teachers implement comprehension instructional practices?; 4) Are there differences among beginner ELA/R, seasoned ELA/R, beginner SS and seasoned SS teachers, in the amount of time they teach comprehension instructional practices?; 5) What is the amount and percent of instructional time that teachers spend implementing vocabulary instructional activities during ELA/R and SS instruction?; 6) Is there a difference between the amount of time ELA/R and SS teachers implement vocabulary instructional activities?; 7) Is there a difference between the amount of time beginner and seasoned teachers implement vocabulary instructional activities?; 8) Are there differences among beginner ELA/R, seasoned ELA/R, beginner SS and seasoned SS teachers, in the amount of time they teach vocabulary instructional activities?; 9) Do ELA/R and SS teachers differ significantly in the frequency with which they implement reading comprehension and vocabulary instructional strategies to facilitate students' comprehension of texts?

Additionally, the observations provided the following conclusions: 1) No comprehension

instruction is being taught to 7<sup>th</sup> grade students in ELA/R and SS classes; 2) Beginner teachers implemented more comprehension practices than seasoned teachers; 3) Teachers have a very limited understanding about reading comprehension; 4) Comprehension and vocabulary practices were implemented minimally; 5) Professional Development is not transferring for instruction; 6) Teachers lack knowledge of comprehension instruction, and 7) No instruction is being provided to struggling learners.

Based on the results, the researcher concluded that a minimal amount of time is being spent on comprehension and vocabulary practices to assist learners on how to understand text. Moreover, no comprehension instruction is taking place in the 7<sup>th</sup> grade English Language Arts/Reading and social studies classrooms.

## **DEDICATION**

This study is dedicated to my husband, Joe Dino Barron, for his endless support in believing in me to finish this laborious, yet rewarding, achievement. His constant words of praise and confidence pushed me to achieve this worthwhile accomplishment.

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## **CHAPTER I**

### **INTRODUCTION**

No matter which way it's examined, learning to read is not as easy as it sounds.

Consequently, teaching reading is a difficult task. Therefore, it follows that an effective teacher of reading should be knowledgeable about much more than using the prescriptive basal reading programs (Bukowiecki, 2007). In general, the role of the teacher has become increasingly demanding. In the midst of high stakes testing and accountability, it seems teachers are teaching more to the test rather than teaching students, hence, not promoting learning. The reality, though, is that teachers are expected to prepare students who can apply critical thinking skills. By this same token, teachers should help develop students' abilities to take a critical literacy stance when reading texts; however, developing a critical literacy stance can be a difficult task (Hall & Piazza, 2008).

Numerous definitions exist as to the meaning of critical thinking. Rudd (2007) defines critical thinking as reasoned, purposive and reflective thinking, which is used to make decisions, solve problems and master concepts. Students must be taught strategic thinking skills as they are not likely to develop them on their own. This involves the explicit teaching of reading strategies in order to help students become seasoned readers. Additionally, if students are to grow as readers, they need to be taught reading strategies to construct meaning from reading text. Teachers need to model the strategies, provide guided practice, and allow time for the students to practice the strategies independently (Prado & Plourde, 2011). When students are able to actively comprehend and simultaneously interpret varying types of texts, they are considered good readers. Therefore, it is necessary to teach all students research-based strategies through direct instruction, modeling, and teacher-

supported practice (Geary, 2006). If students are going to reach their fullest potential in school and society, they must learn thinking and reasoning skills (Rudd, 2007). Teachers should be able to prepare students in such areas as framing problems; finding, integrating and synthesizing information; creating new solutions; learning on their own; and working cooperatively (Darling-Hammond, Wise, & Klein, 1999). As critical readers, students are able to interpret texts and become aware of the messages texts communicate about power, race, and gender (Hall & Piazza, 2008). Learning to engage in critical literacy will also help students become aware of their views and how their views impact their interpretations of texts (Hall & Piazza, 2008). Although critical thinking and higher order thinking are sometimes used interchangeably, they are not equivalent terms (Rudd, 2007). Critical thinking “is one of a family of closely related forms of higher order thinking” (Rudd, 2007). According to Rudd, Baker, and Hoover (2000), they suggest that a definition for critical thinking “is a reasoned, purposive, and introspective approach to solving problems or addressing questions with incomplete evidence and information and for which an incontrovertible solution is unlikely.” As defined by Lewis and Smith (2001), critical thinking can be attributed three meanings as it is associated with problem solving, evaluation or judgment, and a combination of evaluation and problem solving. Higher order thinking is a process that a person follows by taking new information and information stored in memory and rearranging and extending this information to obtain a purpose or discover possible answers in difficult situations (Lewis & Smith, 2001). The authors propose that salient elements of a general critical thinking construct should include skills, rationality, openness to alternative viewpoints, suspension of prior constructions, introspective reflection, and non-egocentric processing.

One of the theoretical frameworks for this research, Vygotsky's sociocultural theory (1978), helps explain how teachers could facilitate students' learning to become critical readers. According to Vygotsky's theory (1978), students can learn from interactions and modeled behaviors of teachers. The sociocultural theory consists of two components: the first part suggests that students can learn from interactions with others. The second part of the theory, also known as the zone of proximal development, states that students' potential level of learning can be achieved with the guidance of a more knowledgeable individual (Channa & Nordin, 2015). As students are taught comprehension strategies through interactions, Vygotsky's theory demonstrates how students can become critical readers. Needless to say, teachers are the key for helping students learn and apply comprehension and vocabulary strategies to understand text (Fowler & Frey, 2000; McLaughlin, 2012).

### **Appropriate Materials for all Students**

If teachers are to guide their students' reading for comprehension, then they must be prepared with the appropriate materials. Likewise if students are going to profit from the reading experience, they need to be capable of reading and understanding the material. Therefore, it is important for teachers to know their students' instructional reading level in order for the students to cope with the reading materials (Gunning, 2003a; McLaughlin, 2012). In doing so, teachers will be able to provide students with reading material at their appropriate, challenge level. In contrast to this research suggestion on matching readers with appropriate text, the Common Core Standards (CCS), an educational initiative in the United States that details what K-12 students should know in English language arts and mathematics at the end of each grade and which have been adopted by 42 states, Texas not being one of them, challenges some of the thinking on reading levels and rather encourages an increased emphasis

on challenging texts which are much more difficult than the current reading levels that students are expected to read (Shanahan, 2012). Three types of reading levels that help identify an individual's comprehension are independent level, instructional level, and frustration level. According to Johnson and Kress (1965), they gave the following set of criteria for the three reading levels: at the free or independent level, word recognition is 99% or better, and comprehension is 90% or better; at the instructional level, word recognition is 95% or better, and comprehension is 75% or better; at the frustration level, word recognition is below 90%, and comprehension is below 50% (Ekwall, 1976).

One of the most important instructional decisions teachers make is matching students with appropriate level of challenge reading materials. The “match,” according to Gunning (2003a), translates to supplying students with reading materials that are at the appropriate level of difficulty. In order to find the appropriate level of difficulty, teachers need to know the readability level of materials (Gunning, 2003a). Numerous approaches exist that can estimate students' reading levels, such as administering an oral assessment to determine the percentage of words that a student can identify, or recognize, in a passage (Cramer & Rosenfield, 2008). Consequently, it is essential that the text be at the appropriate level of difficulty (Gambrell, Wilson, & Gantt, 1981; McLaughlin, 2012), no matter which method is utilized to teach comprehension strategies.

Although there is no single method or single combination of methods that can teach all children to read successfully, teachers who are closest to the students must be the ones to decide which reading methods and materials should be used (International Reading Association, 2002). Assessments that identify the students' strengths and needs can assist teachers to provide students with a wide range of proven methods. Effective assessments

that close the gap between what students know and what they are able to do and relevant curriculum standards can help provide information for instructional decision making (International Reading Association, 2002).

In general, poor readers are frequently placed in materials they cannot read fluently; therefore, poor readers seldom have the opportunity to develop their reading skills. Educators agree that reading instruction will not be profitable for the learner who is placed in reading materials that are too difficult. Therefore, placing students at an appropriate reading level of instruction creates a less difficult time for teachers to teach comprehension instruction, making it easier for students to make sense of their reading (Gambrell, Wilson, & Gantt, 1981; McLaughlin, 2012); hence, acquire reading comprehension. In order to provide useful instruction that facilitates progress, teachers must be aware of a student's reading comprehension level. The task of teaching and improving reading comprehension is not an easy one; it is a challenge that involves several elements, including teaching meaningful strategies and knowing how to implement these teaching approaches for the student to succeed throughout his/her elementary, middle, and high school grades (Snow, 2002).

### **Reading Comprehension Defined**

Reading comprehension is defined as the process of simultaneously extracting and constructing meaning through interaction and involvement with written language (Snow, 2002; McLaughlin, 2012). Figuring out the print and translating it (extracting) and developing a description of the information presented (constructing meaning) are the two main challenges that are posed in reading comprehension (Snow, 2002). Neufeld (2005) defines comprehension as "the process of constructing a supportable understanding of a text." Furthermore, two important features, which include what the reader knows about the topic and

the ideas conveyed through the words printed in the text, are important to the comprehension process (Neufeld, 2005). Three elements, the reader, the text, and the interaction activity, are required for comprehension, and also help define reading comprehension within a sociocultural context, which has a significant impact on reading comprehension. In reference to sociocultural context, reading is perceived to be worthy depending on the reader. In other words, girls and boys differ in their reading preferences (Dole, 2003).

The reader, text, and activity complement one another; hence, a working relationship that incorporates these three components to result in reading comprehension. In general, readers vary in many capacities, such as attention, memory, critical analytic ability, inferencing, and visualization ability. All these characteristics are important in helping students become successful readers who can comprehend written text. As teachers help students understand the written text, they can also assist them in learning how to become active, independent readers. Effective teachers will include short-term and long-term goals in their comprehension instruction in order to provide students with the instruction they need (Dole, 2003).

### **Characteristics of Good Readers**

One of the most critical components of teaching students to read involves the use of reading strategies that they should be able to use to comprehend text. More importantly, teachers must be prepared to provide the necessary instruction for readers to ultimately utilize these strategies to make sense of their reading (Blair, Rupley, & Nichols, 2007).

Despite the inception of educational reforms, such as NCLB (No Child Left Behind) and the Reading First Initiative to promote reading and the ability to read on-grade level, some students continue to lag behind in all areas of reading, especially reading comprehension.

The *Nation's Report Card* (2015) indicates that the percentage of students at or above the Basic level in reading in the eighth grade was 78% in 2013, and decreased to 76% in 2015. At the Basic level, eighth-grade students should be able to locate information; identify statements of main idea, theme, or author's purpose; and make simple inferences from texts. They should be able to interpret the meaning of a word as it is used in the text. Students performing at this level should also be able to state judgments and give some support about content and presentation of content (*Nation's Report Card*, 2015). At the Proficient level, eighth-grade students should be able to provide relevant information and summarize main ideas and themes. They should be able to make and support inferences about a text, connect parts of a text, and analyze text features. Students performing at this level should also be able to fully substantiate judgments about content and presentation of content (*Nation's Report Card*, 2015). Another achievement level used to score students in reading performance is the Advanced level, whereby eighth-grade students are expected to make connections within and across texts and to explain causal relations. They should be able to evaluate and justify the strength of supporting evidence and the quality of an author's presentation. Students performing at the Advanced level also should be able to manage the processing demands of analysis and evaluation by stating, explaining, and justifying (*Nation's Report Card*, 2015). In this particular study, certain behaviors, based on Neufeld's (2005) overview of reading behaviors that are characteristic of expert readers, could provide evidence that students are able to implement reading strategies to understand grade-level text. Strategies, used prior to reading, that Neufeld (2005) indicates are characteristic of expert readers, include setting a purpose for reading, activating their prior knowledge, making predictions about text, and making a plan for reading the text; strategies used during reading, include asking questions of

the text and relating information from text to their previous understanding of the topic; strategies used after reading include rereading, summarizing, and making notes to monitor their comprehension. Behaviors such as those described in the *Nation's Report Card* (2015) seem to reflect the kinds of behaviors Darling-Hammond et. al. (1999) describes students should be able to demonstrate if they have been taught to utilize critical thinking skills.

In order to become fluent and seasoned readers, students need to be taught to become strategic readers. An important factor in strategy use is motivation (Garner, 1987; Schiefel, Schaffner, Moller, & Wigfield, 2012). Unless students want to accomplish a specific goal, such as passing a class, they may not spend the requisite time or energy to utilize the strategies (Garner, 1987). The task of teaching students to become strategic readers may become somewhat bleak when there is no incentive attached (Garner, 1987). Students may be more inclined to employ strategies while reading, if there is a certain goal they wish to accomplish. Sometimes, that goal can be represented through external incentives, such as good grades or financial rewards (Garner, 1987). Extremely important in the process of becoming strategic readers is teaching students the concept of setting a purpose or focus when reading text. When students set a purpose for reading, that purpose will guide them to know how much of the text to read (Conner & Farr, 2009) and how to read it as well. If students do not know their purpose for reading, they will lack essential information to make decisions on how to handle the text and understand the information (Conner & Farr, 2009). In any given subject area, teachers should clearly explain the purpose of any activity for students to be able to perform learning tasks successfully. When students clearly understand the objective for any learning task, they are more likely to learn, whereas an unclear purpose will likely produce no motivation from the students (Fisher & Frey, 2008).



A process that may help students understand the “when” and “why” of using various strategies involves an interactive style of teaching (Heilman, Blair, & Rupley, 2002). By employing this style of teaching, teachers should be able to use an explicit/direct form of instruction to teach strategies (Heilman, et. al., 2002). Explicit/direct instruction involves conveying new information to students through meaningful teacher-student communications while teachers guide student learning. The critical component of explicit/direct instruction is the dialogue between the teacher and student. When teachers explicitly teach their students, they reveal new information through meaningful teacher-student discussions and teacher guidance of learning. Effective teachers of explicit instruction provide guided, independent practices to make sure mastery and transfer of skills to other reading situations occur (Blair, et. al., 2007).

### **Strategy and Skill Defined**

Throughout the history of education, teachers have depended on a variety of strategies to teach students to read. The teachers’ main goal should be to help students comprehend text. In this study, the researcher’s main focus was to identify whether the teacher taught comprehension instruction by utilizing comprehension or vocabulary strategies to help their students become strategic readers.

Strategies can be defined as “behaviors a reader applies before, during, and after reading to construct and understand the author’s message” (Heilman, et. al., 2002). Although both strategy and skill are sometimes used synonymously, and both are important for reading success, they entail different teacher-lesson presentation techniques (Blair, et. al., 2007). Skills are thought to be less complex than strategies; skills are specific in nature, and “are more or less automatic routines” (Dole, Duffy, Roehler, & Pearson, 1991). Strategies require

higher-level thinking, are less specific in nature than skills, and “emphasize intentional and deliberate plans under the control of the reader” (Dole, et al., 1991). Examples of strategies include summarizing, inferring main ideas, and making predictions; examples of skills include decoding, recognizing sequence of events and identifying a stated main idea (Blair, et. al., 2007).

Learning a skill requires more direction from the teacher, while learning a strategy involves a lengthier process which includes explicit/direct instruction (Blair, et. al., 2007). Unlike teaching a skill which does not involve a step-by-step procedure, teaching a strategy involves specific and precise instruction by the teacher. Eventually, the learning of a strategy becomes a skill which allows students to automatically use strategies at their own discretion (Blair, et. al., 2007). Ultimately, the goal of students using strategies at their own discretion is for them to understand the text. Students will usually apply their skills when the text is easy and their knowledge is strong; however, when the text is more difficult and their knowledge is sketchy, students will rely on more strategic reading as the reading task is more complex (Afflerbach, Pearson, & Paris, 2008). Modeling the strategies for the students is a valuable way for teachers to show students how to use strategies to understand text. Consequently, a significant reason for teaching students to use strategies is to help them improve their performance on academically fundamental tasks (Garner, 1987). Critically important is the need to know about how individuals process information in order to teach them strategies, and ultimately determine how well a person utilized strategies to determine if the teaching was successful (Garner, 1987). Some of the ways strategy instruction can be confirmed is through “immediate improvement of performance, durability of instructional effects, and transfer of the instructed activity to new situations” (Garner, 1987).

## **The Problem**

Even before the inception of the NCLB Act (2002), which called for students to be reading on-grade level by third grade and continue reading on-grade level after third grade, some students continue to demonstrate a lack of comprehension skills needed to think critically and perform on-grade level. It appears that the role of the teacher is crucial, since it is the teacher who provides the necessary instruction for students to become skilled and strategic readers (Fowler & Frey, 2000; McLaughlin, 2012). Teachers hold the key to facilitate a student's learning; consequently, teachers need to be versed in teaching the different reading strategies, and how, why, and when to teach these strategies that can contribute to a student's ability to understand grade level text.

Although many educators across the country are working to improve student achievement, research shows that the area of Reading continues to pose an alarming problem that secondary schools face: Many students entering middle and high school lack the skills and/or strategies to comprehend grade-level text, especially expository text. According to *The Nation's Report Card* (2013), high school seniors' reading performance declined from 80 percent in 1992 at the Basic level to 74 percent in 2009 and increased one point to 75 percent in 2013. Eighth graders made a two-point decrease in their reading performance, going from 78 percent in 2013 at the Basic level to 76 percent in 2015 (*Nation's Report Card*, 2015).

It is imperative, then, that teachers recognize what good readers do and what it takes to become a good reader in order to assist the struggling readers (Richek, Caldwell, Jennings, & Lerner, 2002; Ketch, 2005). When teachers provide appropriate strategy instruction, they may succeed in developing the reading abilities of their students. However, it is crucial that students understand "when and where, as well as how, to use strategies" in order to avoid applying

“routines in rote fashion in both appropriate and inappropriate instances” (Garner, 1987).

Research indicates that strategy instruction can be effective when teachers implement a variety of instructional practices in their classrooms (Bryant, Ugel, Thompson, & Hamff, 1999). Instructional practices that have proven to be effective for teaching students strategies involve teachers who provide explicit instruction and advance organizers in outline form; model how to comprehend text; encourage students to use reading strategies; provide daily and sustained instruction; expect strategy mastery; assist students to learn when, where, and how to apply the reading strategies; have students practice strategies; and understand that strategy instruction is part of the entire school curriculum and is relevant in other content-area classes (Bryant, et. al., 1999). However, in a study to describe K-12 classroom teachers’ existing knowledge of, and use of, content reading strategies, Spor and Schneider (1999) found that out of 435 K-12 teachers, fewer than half were familiar with popular identified strategies, and many of the teachers who were familiar with these strategies did not use them. Strategies mentioned in the study included What I know, Want to know, Have learned (KWL), Directed Reading Thinking Activity (DRTA), Language Experience Approach (LEA) webbing/mapping, ReQuest, journals/logs, SQ3R, Guided Reading Procedure (GRP), outlining, and study guides. In their study, Spor and Schneider (1999) developed a survey of multiple choice questions to elicit data about the 435 subjects and their practices related to content reading strategies. According to the survey results, content reading strategies are not widely known and used (Spor & Schneider, 1999).

Three levels of cognitive knowledge may assist students in the use of strategies. Descriptive knowledge, also known as declarative knowledge, is knowing the what and what it is meant to do; procedural knowledge is knowing the how and its implementation; conditional knowledge

is the most important of the three – it is understanding not only what and how but the when and why (Sungur, 2009). It is critically important for students to understand why they use and apply strategies to their reading. When students understand why they use strategies to comprehend what they are reading, they are aware of the strategies they can utilize and are able to monitor their progress for reading comprehension to occur (Paris, Wixson, & Palinscar, 1986). Consequently, students are expected to be better prepared to confront reading challenges that are posed by state assessments, such as the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR), be academically prepared for college courses, or simply prepared to participate in the work force community.

Numerous reading comprehension strategies abound for students to become expert readers. At Herbert Hoover High School in San Diego, California, between the years 1999-2002, a staff development committee of teachers, administrators, and San Diego State University colleagues identified seven instructional strategies that proved to be effective in improving reading achievement (Fisher, Frey, & Williams, 2002). The instructional strategies, developed by Hoover High School, included read alouds, a strategy that allows students to hear fluent reading; K-W-L charts, language charts that help students organize their inquiries; graphic organizers, which provide students visual information that complements class discussions or text; vocabulary instruction, skills that students could use in other content areas, such as understanding the meaning of word families, prefixes, suffixes; writing to learn, a strategy that helps students inquire, clarify, or reflect on the content; structured note taking, which created a study habit for students to record facts and led to deeper student engagement and reflection; and reciprocal teaching, a strategy used to engage readers with text, as well as predict, question, clarify, and summarize (Fisher, Frey, & Williams, 2002). As a result of

implementing these seven literacy strategies during 1999-2002, Hoover's student achievement scores increased, after being some of the lowest in the state. Teaching reading comprehension is rather difficult, but methods do exist that can assist teachers to make the process easier.

### **Purpose of Study**

This study was intended to identify the amount of time teachers spent implementing reading comprehension and vocabulary instruction to facilitate students' comprehension of texts. This study also examined if teachers differ significantly in the frequency with which they use reading comprehension and vocabulary strategies to facilitate students' comprehension of texts.

### **Research Questions**

The research questions that guided this research study were:

1. What is the amount and percent of instructional time that teachers spend implementing reading comprehension instructional strategies during 7<sup>th</sup> grade English Language Arts/Reading (ELA/R) and social studies (SS) instruction?
2. Is there a difference between the amount of time ELA/R and SS teachers implement comprehension instructional practices?
3. Is there a difference between the amount of time beginner and seasoned teachers implement comprehension instructional practices?
4. Are there differences among beginner ELA/R, seasoned ELA/R, beginner SS and seasoned SS teachers, in the amount of time they teach comprehension instructional practices?
5. What is the amount and percent of instructional time that teachers spend implementing vocabulary instructional activities during ELA/R and SS instruction?

6. Is there a difference between the amount of time ELA/R and SS teachers implement vocabulary instructional activities?
7. Is there a difference between the amount of time beginner and seasoned teachers implement vocabulary instructional activities?
8. Are there differences among beginner ELA/R, seasoned ELA/R, beginner SS and seasoned SS teachers, in the amount of time they teach vocabulary instructional activities?
9. Do ELA/R and SS teachers differ significantly in the frequency with which they implement reading comprehension and vocabulary instructional strategies to facilitate students' comprehension of texts?

### **Definition of Terms**

Effective teacher – able to construct integrated learning experiences, model practices students are expected to adopt, help students to improve their skills by assessing their learning and provide continuous intensive feedback (Darling-Hammond & Baratz-Snowden, 2007).

Reading ability – student's ability to incorporate word recognition, accuracy, comprehension, fluency, and prosody into reading (Guszk, 1997).

Reading comprehension – meaning is constructed when readers make connections between what they know and what they are reading (McLaughlin, 2012).

Reading comprehension instruction – strategies taught not only for the purpose of retelling and responding to questions, but also for students to manipulate their own thinking in order to comprehend text more deeply (Gunning, 2003b).

Non-instructional procedures – teacher spends time doing something that is not instructing anybody in reading, i.e., check papers at desk, records grades, waits while children do assignments (Durkin, 1978).

Student Success Initiative (SSI) – an initiative that called for students in grades 5 and 8 to pass both the reading and mathematics TAKS in order to be promoted to grades 6 and 9, respectively (Texas Education Agency).

### **Assumptions**

For the purpose of this study, the assumptions were:

1. Teachers vary in their knowledge of reading comprehension and vocabulary instruction.
2. Teachers receive ample time to plan strategies for providing reading comprehension and vocabulary instruction.
3. Teachers vary in their use of strategies for providing comprehension and vocabulary instruction.
4. Lessons observed are representative of lessons taught when teachers are not being observed.
5. Teachers with three or less years of teaching will be considered beginner, while teachers with 15 or more years of teaching will be considered seasoned.

### **Limitations**

1. This study was limited to six seventh grade ELA/R teachers and six seventh grade SS teachers at four middle schools in a South Texas border community.
2. This study was limited to 36 observations each lasting 45 minutes of six seventh grade ELA/R teachers and six seventh grade SS teachers.



## **Significance of Study**

The data collected from this study will provide secondary school administrators and reading specialists with information regarding the extent to which reading comprehension instruction is incorporated into middle school ELA/R and SS classrooms. Data from this study could assist reading specialists with the organization of staff development to address concerns regarding reading comprehension instruction. Results from this research will also provide secondary administrators with information regarding the effectiveness of teachers in promoting reading comprehension.

Through this mixed methods research study, different theoretical frameworks were incorporated to support the study's purpose of examining the types of reading comprehension and vocabulary instruction that were implemented by teachers. The use of different theories, such as Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, schema theory, and sociocognitive theory, helped support and further explain observed phenomena. Vygotsky's theory suggests that social experience shapes one's ways of thinking and interpreting the world; therefore, the theory helps explain how and why humans learn (Jaramillo, 1996). In this study, the researcher sought to find out how teachers promoted reading comprehension for students to understand grade-level text. Within his sociocultural theory, Vygotsky included a concept to differentiate between two levels of development: the actual level of development achieved by independent problem solving, and the potential level of development reached with the guidance or collaboration of an adult or a more capable peer (Mahn, 1999). The latter is also referred to as the zone of proximal development, which is the difference between what a student can do on his/her own and what s/he can do with the help of an adult (Gunning, 2010). In this study, Vygotsky's sociocultural framework offered a way to understand if and

when teachers taught comprehension and vocabulary instruction to help students understand grade-level text.

Schema Theory (Anderson, 2004) suggests that a reader's schema or prior knowledge provides much of the basis for understanding, learning, and remembering the ideas in stories and texts. Anderson (2004) explains schema theory by stating that a reader will understand a message if the reader is able to have the schema that provides a true picture of the events described in the message. The schema theory suggests that teacher participants from this study could assist their students with reading strategies that activate their prior knowledge to understand written text. The sociocognitive interactive model (Ruddell & Unrau, 2004) is made up of three major components, the reader, the text, and the teacher, and suggests that reading is viewed as a meaning-construction process in the instructional context of the classroom.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE**

#### **Theoretical Frameworks**

Three theoretical principles that help form the foundation on which literacy instruction and practices could be based are Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory, the schema theory, and Ruddell & Unrau's sociocognitive theory (1994).

#### **Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory**

Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory suggests that students learn from interactions with others and culture allows for students to create their own view of the world. There is a strong connection between culture, communication, and education. It seems that culture cannot exist without communication and vice versa. Communication is a language which is part of students' culture; therefore, teachers need to be conscious of the importance language plays in educating our students (Gay, 2000). A second part of Vygotsky's theory is his development of the concept of the zone of proximal development. Through the zone of proximal development, Vygotsky stated that students' range of learning included the actual development level to the potential level achieved with the guidance of another more knowledgeable individual (Channa & Nordin, 2015). Within students' zone of proximal development, Vygotsky believed that teachers should provide meaningful content accompanied by well-developed social interactions (Channa & Nordin, 2015).

Four principles are fundamental to Vygotsky's sociocultural theory: 1) children construct their knowledge; 2) development cannot be separated from its social context; 3) learning can lead development, and 4) language plays a central role in mental development. When we use this theory as a foundation for literacy instruction, students can have an opportunity to learn

how to read and be successful in reaching the comprehension component of the reading process. Hence, Vygotsky's theory appears to function as a good foundation on how students should receive literacy instruction.

### **Schema Theory**

Another significant theory that could help explain the delivery of literacy instruction for students to comprehend grade-level texts is Schema Theory, which suggests that a reader's schema provides much of the basis for understanding, learning, and remembering the ideas in stories and texts (Anderson, 2004). As depicted by Anderson (2004), schema theory states that a reader understands a message when the reader brings to mind a schema that provides a good account of the objects and events described in the message. Anderson (2004) notes that schema theory emphasizes the fact that more than one interpretation of a text is possible, and ultimately it is the reader's culture, sex, race, religion, nationality, and occupation that will determine what schema will be "brought to bear" on a text. Additionally, schema theory suggests that text units which are more likely to be remembered are those that are learned due to the importance that readers place on the text units (Anderson, 2004). For purposes of this study, this could mean that teachers need to understand their students' needs in order to teach reading comprehension strategies that students can use to comprehend text. Bransford (2004) reemphasizes Anderson's argument that activation of appropriate knowledge is fundamental for comprehending and remembering. Furthermore, he states that poor comprehension and memory skills may be attributed to a lack of background knowledge (Bransford, 2004). Therefore, when teachers facilitate the process of activating students' prior knowledge or schema of reading strategies, students may be able to apply a variety of strategies to understand text.

## **Sociocognitive Interactive Model**

According to the sociocognitive interactive model, reading is viewed as a meaning-construction process in the instructional context of the classroom. Three major components make up this meaning-construction process: the reader, the text, and the teacher, which are “in a state of dynamic change and interchange” during the meaning negotiation and meaning construction processes (Ruddell & Unrau, 2004). The first component of the model, the reader, consists of the students’ previous life experiences which constitute the students’ prior beliefs and knowledge. The reader component also consists of two interrelated parts, which are the affective conditions and the cognitive conditions. The affective conditions consist of the students’ motivation to read, as well as the students’ personal sociocultural values and beliefs about reading and schooling. The cognitive conditions include the students’ background knowledge of language, word-analysis skills, text processing strategies, and understanding of classroom and social interaction. Significant within the reader component is knowledge use and control, which is defined as the student’s ability to construct, monitor, and represent meaning (Ruddell & Unrau, 2004).

A second component of the sociocognitive model is the teacher, whose prior beliefs and knowledge make up the teacher’s previous affective and cognitive conditions which are based on life experiences. Affective conditions include motivation to engage students, appropriateness of instructional stance, and personal sociocultural values and beliefs. Cognitive conditions include the understanding of the reader’s meaning-construction process to teaching strategies and personal and world knowledge (Ruddell & Unrau, 2004). Also relevant to the teacher component is the teacher’s knowledge and how this knowledge is used to make instructional decisions (Ruddell & Unrau, 2004).

A third component of the model is the text and classroom context, which is defined as the learning environment in which the meaning-negotiation process occurs. This component highlights the reading process which occurs as the teacher and students build understanding through meaning negotiation in the responsive classroom context (Ruddell & Unrau, 2004). Essentially, the sociocognitive model underscores the importance of effective teachers of reading setting clear purposes for instruction and providing strategy instruction for their students to understand the written text in a supportive learning environment.

### **Characteristics of an Effective Teacher of Reading**

While the teacher is a critical component for helping students learn how to construct meaning from their text, all teachers are not equally effective in facilitating learners' comprehension. Teachers have different qualities that help shape who they are. Additionally, these qualities help define an effective teacher. Although there have been numerous research studies on the topic of effective teaching of reading, there is little research on the qualities of teachers who are effective in teaching reading, (Wray, Medwell, Fox, & Poulson, 1999). An essential instructional practice of an effective teacher is the ability to model for the students. Effective teachers spend more time modeling for students how to carry out specific tasks/assignments (Wray et al., 1999). Effective teachers model many skills and strategies, such as word recognition skills, comprehension strategies, and writing strategies, very frequently to small groups of students demonstrating similar difficulties in their reading and writing abilities (Mohan, Lundeberg, & Reffitt, 2008). Modeling by the teacher the use of strategies helps students increase their literacy skills (Wray et al., 1999). When teachers model for students, they are more likely to grasp the concept of how the reading process works and eventually construct meaning out of their reading for

understanding (Wray et al., 1999).

Effective teachers should also be able to implement continuous assessment before, during, and after reading, in order to determine students' strengths and weaknesses and address their needs. Additionally, through assessment, effective teachers will know their students' reading ability in order to determine the appropriate difficulty level of text for the students. Effective teachers use numerous types of assessments, such as interviews, observations, and informal tests, in an attempt to obtain a complete representation of their students' reading and make informed instructional decisions to help increase their students' reading achievement (Blair et al., 2007). Equally important is for an effective teacher to be able to monitor the progress of students; scaffolding plays a significant role in monitoring students' success. When teachers scaffold instruction, they act as models and ask students questions, ultimately encouraging students to seek help if they are confused (Raphael, Pressley, & Mohan, 2008). Scaffolding has been found to be a practice that supports student engagement (Raphael, et. al., 2008).

Effective teachers also expose their students to a great deal of literature, and provide numerous opportunities for students to read independently. Children who read frequently and on a volunteer basis are positive about reading and are good readers (International Reading Association, 2002). Children who are given the opportunity to read more will read better (International Reading Association, 2002). Additionally, effective teachers expose their students to literature that matches their cultural schemata and background knowledge (Drucker, 2003). One way that all students' reading needs can be addressed is by matching them with appropriate linguistic and cultural books. When the teacher exposes her class to literature that matches students' linguistic and cultural background, that teacher is providing rich literature and also building background knowledge for students to comprehend text

(Drucker, 2003). Furthermore, by interacting with books that are culturally and linguistically appropriate, students are being exposed to key words, which will help expand their vocabularies (Drucker, 2003).

An important characteristic of an effective teacher is his/her expectations for all students with the accompanying belief that all students can achieve (Grant & Gillette, 2006). Other important characteristics of effective teachers include high verbal abilities, educational coursework, certification, content knowledge, and teaching experience. Research indicates that teachers with higher verbal abilities are better able to convey ideas to students and communicate with them in a clear manner (Stronge, 2002). Also critical to teacher effectiveness is the amount of educational coursework a teacher obtains. Studies reveal that fully prepared teachers with background knowledge in pedagogy can recognize students' needs more easily and are able to differentiate instruction and increase student achievement (Stronge, 2002).

An important characteristic that is closely related to educational coursework is certification. Research shows that certified teachers tend to have higher student achievement (Stronge, 2002). A teacher's knowledge of the content is an important quality of an effective teacher, as research indicates that teachers who have knowledge of the content are able to go beyond the textbook and involve students in meaningful discussions and activities (Stronge, 2002). This characteristic of an effective teacher helps students make connections to the real world and find relevant meaning in their reading. Additionally, teachers' knowledge of the content allows them to engage the students during the presentation of the lesson (Stronge, Tucker, & Hindman, 2004). The amount of teaching experience also contributes to the effectiveness of a teacher. Experienced teachers seem to be effective experts who are able to



use efficient planning strategies, practice interactive decision-making, and embody effective classroom management skills (Stronge, 2002).

Effective teachers are also able to help their students advance “from where they are to where they need to be” (Darling-Hammond & Baratz-Snowden, 2007). A critical characteristic of an effective teacher is organizing activities, materials, and instruction based on his/her student’s prior knowledge in order for them to be successful.

Cognitive psychologist Dan Willingham attributes background knowledge as the key to reading comprehension. A professor at the University of Virginia, Willingham reiterates what the schema theory stresses by pointing out that background knowledge is necessary “to understand the vocabulary of a given subject, to provide context that allows readers to fill in the gaps and to draw conclusions based on generalities” (Anonymous, 2007). Additionally, effective teachers are able to determine what concepts students bring to class about the subject, and any misconceptions that may confuse them. Understanding students’ misconceptions allows teachers to address the problem and ensure that students understand the required and necessary vocabulary to ultimately comprehend the text. Therefore, these teachers are able to design their lessons to meet the needs of their students (Darling-Hammond & Baratz-Snowden, 2007).

From his research on high-level teaching effectiveness, Ruddell (2008) concluded that teachers who were considered to be highly effective possess certain characteristics, such as being sensitive to individual student needs, motivations, and aptitudes. Additionally, these teachers also possess a unique ability to relate to and use students’ prior knowledge and beliefs to make the subject content personally relevant. Furthermore, highly effective

teachers are instrumental in creating an instructional flow that provides active participation, cohesion, purposeful direction, and feedback in their classrooms (Ruddell, 2008).

Ruddell (2008) uses the sociocognitive reading theory (Ruddell & Unrau, 2004) as a basis for understanding and interpreting the behaviors of highly effective or influential, teachers. The sociocognitive theory suggests that a teacher's prior knowledge and beliefs about instruction and his/her use and control of this knowledge during instruction are vital for effective literacy instruction to occur in the classroom. Therefore, the theory helps to demonstrate that an influential teacher is an instructional decision maker who develops clear goals and purposes, as well as conducts learning through careful planning and reader motivation strategies (Ruddell, 2008).

An important factor that distinguishes influential teachers is their use of meaning-negotiation strategies. Through the meaning-negotiation process, teachers activate students' prior knowledge, encourage the construction of meaning, and incorporate the students' responses as members of the classroom. Additionally, the highly effective teacher focuses on interpretive and applicative levels of thinking that actively engage the students to use their skills of focusing, extending, clarifying, and questioning strategies (Ruddell, 2008). Ruddell and Unrau (2004) emphasize that the meaning-negotiation process is critical to highly effective and responsive teaching.

Different tools are used by effective teachers to assess how their students learn and what the students know (Darling-Hammond & Baratz-Snowden, 2007). Of great significance is the students' teacher's ability to engage students in active learning through activities such as debating, discussing, researching, writing, evaluating, experimenting, and constructing models, papers, and products (Darling-Hammond & Baratz-Snowden, 2007). Effective

teachers also provide constant feedback that helps their students improve and be successful. Students are provided models of finished products, which effective teachers use as a form of feedback to communicate their expectations for high-quality work and for students to understand the task they are expected to complete. Students can use the feedback to make improvements as they revise their work to meet the standards outlined by their teachers (Darling-Hammond & Baratz-Snowden, 2007). An additional and notable quality of an effective teacher is the ability to involve the students' parents in the learning process in order to create strong connections between home and school (Darling-Hammond & Baratz-Snowden, 2007). When parents are included in the students' learning process, students have fewer barriers and more encouragement for their learning (Darling-Hammond & Baratz-Snowden, 2007).

### **Strategies that can be used for Developing Students' Comprehension**

Developing comprehension is the ultimate goal of reading. However, struggling readers tend to encounter comprehension problems which prevent them from constructing meaning and making sense of the text. Some of the comprehension problems students encounter include the lack of basic decoding skills, a limited academic vocabulary, and/or failure to read for meaning (Gunning, 2002). When students lack basic decoding skills, they tend to have difficulty with more than five percent of the words in a text. Students who have a limited academic vocabulary appear to have difficulty understanding more abstract and academically oriented text that might exceed their parents' academic backgrounds, therefore preventing the parents from helping their children (Gunning, 2002). When students have an idea of what they're going to learn, it makes it easier for them to see relationships between new and old concepts. Comprehension involves relating the unknown to the known;

therefore, when students activate their background or prior knowledge of a concept, they are better able to see the relationships between new and old concepts (Gunning, 2003a).

Seasoned readers usually set a purpose for reading, using a variety of strategies to construct meaning from their reading. However, struggling readers who do not know how to set a purpose or goal for reading tend to fail to read for meaning (Gunning, 2002).

Teachers need to be aware of which reading strategies are helpful for students to understand grade-level narrative and expository texts. The narrative text's structure helps students remember the selection; therefore, as the students analyze the story, they are able to identify characters, setting, and plot. Readers are exposed to story structure, literary elements, and written language through narrative texts (Gunning, 2003a).

Another form of text structure is expository text, which tends to be more difficult to read than narrative text. Some purposes of expository text are to inform, explain, describe, or present information. Expository text requires the reader to combine details to identify the main idea. Most often, expository text consists of information that is unfamiliar to students; however, the reader is expected to understand new ideas, remember them, and relate them to other information from the text in order to incorporate the new text information with what the reader already knows about the topic. Consequently, background knowledge plays an important role in students' ability to understand text. Students who have had the opportunity of being read to and talked to when they were young children will usually make more progress than those students who have not had the same opportunity (Anonymous, 2007).

Unlike narrative text, expository text has a variety of organizational patterns, which students need to recognize in order to be able to identify a clearly evident overall organization of the selection, or a greater demand will be placed on the reader's memory and

cognitive processing. Some of the types of expository text structures include enumeration-description, time sequence, explanation-process, comparison-contrast, problem-solution, and cause-effect. Enumeration-description lists details about a subject without any time relationship among them. Time sequence includes signal words, such as *after*, *first*, *finally*; time order is specified with this type of text structure. Explanation-process involves telling how something works. Comparison-contrast utilizes similarities and/or differences with signal words such as *but*, *however*, *although*. Problem-solution includes a problem and a solution or series of solutions. Cause-effect involves an effect with a cause or a series of causes (Gunning, 2003a). Additionally, comprehension of expository text involves higher level thinking skills, such as differentiating facts and opinions, and recognizing persuasive statements (Gunning, 2003a).

Different strategies can increase comprehension of informational text. Although a plethora of strategies exist that can assist in comprehension of text, F. B. Davis (1944) created a list of some of the most powerful ones, which have been used repeatedly due to their role in effective reading. These include: using knowledge and text clues to make predictions; using internal and external features of informational text to predict and monitor; generating questions about informational texts; generating elaborations about text; organizing and reorganizing texts; summarizing text; combining information across texts; reflecting critically and personally on informational reading; and using oral and written language to formulate, express, and reflect on ideas (Ogle & Blachowicz, 2002). These strategies serve to keep students actively engaged, thereby helping them attend to the external physical organization of text (e.g., headings, chapters, table of contents) and internal structure of text (e.g., problem-solution, cause-effect). As a result, teachers are able to keep students involved

in the learning process and capture their desire to read and learn (Ogle & Blachowicz, 2002).

As students learn to become strategic readers, they need to make use of a small group of strategies, such as those noted by Davis. Strategic readers need to learn to develop procedures in order to determine when to use the different strategies (Ogle & Blachowicz, 2002).

Consequently, as students make use of successful reading strategies, teachers can be credited for helping promote students' understanding of the reading material. It is critical for teachers to identify successful reading strategies that can help enhance the reading abilities of struggling readers. Teachers may look to successful readers to identify strategies that may help struggling readers improve their comprehension of text.

Good readers utilize a variety of strategies to understand text. Duke and Pearson (2002) developed a list of strategies good readers use in order to comprehend text. These include: having clear goals in mind for their reading; looking over the text before they read it to make predictions about the text; reading selectively to make decisions about their reading; determining the meaning of unfamiliar words and concepts; integrating their prior knowledge into the text; monitoring their understanding of the text; and, thinking about the text before, during, and after reading (Vacca & Vacca, 2005). When readers read selectively, they make decisions about what to read carefully or quickly, and what to reread, and what not to read. As readers try to make sense of unfamiliar words and concepts, they may utilize context clues or the techniques of defining prefixes and suffixes. When readers use prior knowledge *before, during, and after* reading, they are able to develop a sense of interest (before), formulate inferences (during), and make elaborations on the content of the text (after reading). By monitoring their understanding of the text, good readers are able to make

adjustments in their reading. Thinking about the text *before*, *during*, and *after* the reading helps readers to respond to textually implicit questions (Vacca & Vacca, 2005).

An important and popular strategy to improve comprehension is questioning. As teachers use questioning with students, the strategy helps students remain focused in their reading to improve their understanding of a selection (Massey, 2002). Comprehension is facilitated through the use of questions; they can be utilized to develop concepts, build background, and lead students to higher levels of thinking (Gunning, 2003a). Questions are also critical in promoting understanding and retention; depending on the questions teachers ask, the questions help to shape students' comprehension and their concept of what is significant in a text (Gunning, 2003a). It is imperative for teachers to ask questions that assist students in seeing relationships among ideas and relating new information to their background knowledge. Consequently, students should be able to apply what they have learned to their own lives (Gunning, 2003a). The type of questions asked is also important as they may include those that are least demanding to those that require critical thinking.

In providing a list of types of questions, Gunning (2003b) used Weinstein and Mayer's (1986) system. Included in the list are comprehending, organizing, elaborating, and monitoring types of questions. With comprehending questions, students are able to answer on a literal level, such as naming the main character or reciting facts from a selection. In organizing questions, students are able to identify important details to make connections among them; this could include identifying main ideas and summarizing. Elaborating questions involve students making connections between the text and their prior knowledge; with elaborating questions, students also make inferences, evaluate or judge. Monitoring

questions require the students to be aware of their own cognitive processes and be able to take necessary steps to repair comprehension (Gunning, 2003b).

Also popular is the guided reading strategy, which is used mainly with groups of students at the elementary level who are approximately on the same level of reading development. As the strategy implies, the teacher provides guidance for students to be successful in their reading. As the teacher supplies students with the necessary assistance, students learn to use different word recognition and comprehension strategies (Gunning, 2003a). Essentially, the main goal of guided reading is to provide students the opportunity to become independent readers. The guidance provided by the teacher depends on the abilities of the students and the difficulty of the reading selection. Examples of how guided reading can be implemented include going through the text page by page for beginning readers, whereas guidance for advanced readers may be a brief preview (Gunning, 2003a). Another useful strategy that can be used to build comprehension is reciprocal teaching, which consists of four supporting strategies: questioning, clarifying, summarizing, and predicting. Founded by Palinscar and Brown (1986), reciprocal teaching provides important scaffolding to both readers and writers (Slater & Horstman, 2002). Of great significance about the strategy is the work between the students and teacher to improve students' understanding of informational text and the ability of the students to monitor their comprehension (Slater & Horstman, 2002). The gradual release of responsibility model (Pearson & Gallagher, 1983) presents a chronological sequence of the strategy which allows students to gradually progress from an instructional task, such as generating questions, and which calls for the teacher to take responsibility for the students' successful completion of the task, to instruction that requires students to assume increasing responsibility, and finally, to students taking full responsibility for the



instructional task (Slater & Horstman, 2002). Essentially, it is expected for students to monitor their own comprehension by applying strategies they have learned. The model of instruction, a gradual release of responsibility, aims at preparing students to assume responsibility for monitoring their comprehension (Harvey & Goudvis, 2000). The model emphasizes guided practice, independent practice, and feedback, which help students summarize, ask questions, make predictions, and eventually learn to apply strategies on their own to foster their understanding (Harvey & Goudvis, 2000).

As the reciprocal teaching strategy implies, the teacher must intervene or reciprocate through modeling and direct explanation throughout the reciprocal teaching lesson in order to monitor student progress, especially when working with struggling readers (Slater & Horstman, 2002; McAllum, 2014). The questioning portion of the strategy helps students identify main ideas. Clarifying enables students to remain actively engaged in the reading in case clarification is needed about the text. Summarizing helps students to stay focused (McAllum, 2014; Slater & Horstman, 2002) by outlining the main ideas and details, and predicting requires students to practice what they have learned. Predicting allows students to make predictions about upcoming text sections, based on what they have previously read; therefore, students have some type of expectation of the upcoming section (Slater & Horstman, 2002; McAllum, 2014). Predicting gives a reader a purpose for reading and allows the student to see whether his/her prediction is correct (Gunning, 2003a; McAllum, 2014).

Teachers can also take advantage of using scaffolds, support and guidance that can help students function on a higher level (Gunning, 2003a). As a result, the teacher is the key figure in the students' learning of the strategies. A teacher must be knowledgeable, flexible, and methodical, if s/he is going to teach comprehension strategies effectively (Alvermann,

Phelps, & Ridgeway, 2007). In order for comprehension strategy instruction to be effective, a teacher should introduce the strategy, model the strategy, and guide the students as they use the strategy (Alvermann, Phelps, & Ridgeway, 2007). It is critical for teachers to model and directly teach students specific strategies not only to understand the meaning of words, but also to understand the meaning of the text (Bukowiecki, 2007).

Essentially, when students are able to use strategies on their own, they are able to construct meaning based on the text and thus achieve comprehension. An ultimate and important goal of reading should be comprehension. A variety of techniques should be used when teaching comprehension to struggling readers (Gunning, 2002). It is important for students to understand and make use of necessary strategies to become skilled readers. However, when students lack confidence in using appropriate strategies to make sense of texts, this condition tends to diminish their willingness to use the strategies (Gunning, 2002).

The Report of the National Reading Panel (2000) and the RAND Report on Reading Comprehension (2002) draw some interesting conclusions about effective comprehension instruction. Both reports conclude that strategy instruction improves students' comprehension of text when integrated into subject matter learning. These reports also suggest that: explicit instruction in the use of strategies is a benefit to struggling readers; exposing students to narrative and expository texts is also a benefit; and some effective comprehension strategies include question generation, question answering routines, comprehension monitoring, and summarizing (Vacca & Vacca, 2005).

The task of teaching reading strategies is a challenging one. Learning to use a strategy involves a long process (Gunning, 2003b). Motivation plays a significant role when it comes to using strategies. When students believe the strategies they have learned are useful to their

performance, they will be more inclined to use them (Gunning, 2003b). Additionally, as students learn to apply appropriate strategies to their reading, they demonstrate the development of their conditional knowledge to facilitate reading comprehension.

### **Effective Professional Development that Targets Teaching Reading Strategies**

It comes as no surprise that on-going professional development sessions assist effective teachers to remain current of the most recent developments in their respective fields. The No Child Left Behind Act of 2002 (NCLB) states that professional development efforts should advance teachers' understanding of effective instructional strategies that are scientifically research based, should be sustained and intensive, instead of one-day or short-term workshops, and should be classroom focused and developed with participation of teachers.

If professional development is going to be effective, it must shift from teachers to students, from districts to schools, and from single efforts to comprehensive plans (Kent, 2004). Effective professional development depends on the kind and quality of the in-service (Kent, 2004). The ultimate goal of professional development is school reform; therefore, it should be driven by research that addresses effective teaching practices that will allow students to be successful (Kent, 2004). Professional development should be developed to meet the instructional needs of the teachers so that they can meet the needs of their students. It is imperative for teachers to realize the importance of high quality professional development and make a commitment "to translating theory into practice for the betterment of instructional practice" (Kent, 2004).

In order for professional development to serve a meaningful purpose, schools need to design the session(s) to meet the needs of their campus. Effective professional development can be characterized in large measure by what the professional development experience is

intended to achieve, such as alter instruction or organizational practices, the role of the presenters of the professional development, and the conceptualization of professional development held by those leading the training (Pink & Hyde, 1992).

Brozo and Fisher (2010) contend that “effective professional development must be at the heart of efforts to nurture adolescents’ content-area reading skills.” As such, Brozo and Fisher offer five principles for guiding professional development. Principle 1 states that teachers should be offered a manageable number of new strategies to build adolescent literacy. Principle 2 recommends that support be provided immediately in the classroom after the professional development workshop in order for instructional improvements to occur. Principle 3 suggests that teachers form focus groups for the purpose of discussing, proposing, and implementing literacy priorities for the improvement of student reading achievement. Principle 4 calls for varying the formats used in professional development for teachers to have opportunities to engage, share their knowledge, and expand their instructional repertoires. Principle 5 recommends focusing professional development efforts on teachers most eager to learn new practices to implement in their classrooms; these teachers’ eagerness may eventually spread to colleagues with whom they interact (Brozo & Fisher, 2010). Consequently, an investment in high-quality teacher professional development will help produce a successful secondary literacy program, and will help achieve greater student engagement and higher students achievement (Brozo & Fisher, 2010).

In a year-long study of professional learning conducted by Gail M. Thibodeau (2008) on a collaborative study group and the investigation of materials and methods for the integration of strategy instruction and content instruction, the results showed that the collaborative

experience had positive effects on the teachers' knowledge and instructional practices related to content literacy and on their students' achievement. As part of the study, Thibodeau (2008) met with the collaborative group, which included secondary teachers of a variety of subjects including English, geometry, algebra, biology, earth science, family and consumer science, and human growth and development, once a month for eight months during the 2005-2006 school year, beginning in August. During the meetings, discussions centered on specific literacy strategies and ways the strategies would be applied in the different content areas (Thibodeau, 2008). As a result, the interdisciplinary collaborative group effort showed that teachers benefited from job-embedded, on-going professional learning. The professional development helped teachers improve student achievement, therefore suggesting that long-term collaborative efforts, including the on-going support of a specialist or consultant, are effective professional learning options for secondary teachers trying to implement literacy strategies in their content instruction (Thibodeau, 2008).

A critical factor for professional development to be effective is the urgency to cater the session(s) to other relevant individuals, besides the teachers, such as administrators and parents (Pink & Hyde, 1992). Research indicates that the role and support of administrators is imperative for the success of the professional development aimed at promoting school change (Pink & Hyde, 1992). Effective professional development, when planned appropriately, can work and can lead to student success.

### **Summary**

This study was conducted to investigate whether reading comprehension and vocabulary instruction were being implemented in middle school ELA/R and SS classrooms. The study also examined any differences in the frequency with which they used comprehension

instruction and vocabulary strategies to facilitate students' comprehension of texts. Three theoretical frameworks that were used in this study included Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory, the schema theory and Ruddell & Unrau's sociocognitive theory (1994). Included in the Review of the Literature were descriptions and explanations of instructional strategies that can be used for developing comprehension, which is the ultimate goal of reading. Additionally, a discussion on effective staff development suggests schools need to design sessions that meet the instructional needs of the teachers in order for the teachers to meet the needs of their students.

## **CHAPTER III**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **Introduction**

Observations and interviews were used to gather data related to teachers' knowledge and practices designed to enhance reading comprehension and assist in interpreting the findings of this research study. These data collection tools also helped in conveying a close resemblance to the truth of the study, i.e., determining if teachers were providing comprehension instruction. When researchers publish their works, they allow for the procedures that they utilized in their research to be made public. By making the procedures public, they allow other researchers to conduct replication studies to find out if the original procedures will generate the same results (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007). Because studies in education often have weaknesses in methodology or limited generalizability, the need for replication is essential, ultimately producing a valuable contribution by perhaps, repeating, and improving upon, a research study which other researchers perform (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007).

#### **Research Design**

A mixed methods design was used for this study. A mixed methods design incorporates qualitative and quantitative components and can provide "richer insights" and raise more interesting questions for future research (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007). Gall, Gall, and Borg (2007) specify that mixed methods designs use quantitative methods to answer research questions and qualitative methods to discover other factors that may contribute to the relevance of the study's goal. This mixed methods study involved the use of classroom observations to determine the amount of time teachers spent implementing comprehension

instruction to facilitate students' comprehension of texts, and if teachers differ significantly in the frequency with which they use comprehension strategies to facilitate students' comprehension of texts. The theoretical frameworks supporting this study included Vygotsky's sociocultural theory (1938), schema theory (Anderson, 2004), and the sociocognitive model of reading (Ruddell & Unrau, 2004).

### **Subjects and Sampling**

Stratified random sampling was employed during this study. The teachers who participated in the study were chosen so that certain subgroups in the population were adequately represented in the sample (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007). Among the participants were three beginner ELA/R teachers, three beginner SS teachers, three seasoned ELA/R teachers and three seasoned SS teachers. All participants taught seventh grade at one of four middle schools in a South Texas school district at the time of the study. Teacher participants were aware of the study, but did not know the purpose of the research.

The teachers for this research study were selected with the help of a teacher development model, created by Berkeley Professors Hubert Dreyfus, philosopher, and Stuart Dreyfus, computer scientist. In a discussion on the development of expertise in teaching, presented during the Charles W. Hunt Memorial Lecture at the Annual Meeting of the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (1988), David Berliner described five stages of skill development in teachers. According to the model, Berliner (1988), who is known for studying teacher expertise since 1977 (Scherer, 2001), noted that the five stages of skill development include novice, advanced beginner, competent, proficient, and expert. At the novice stage, teachers are gaining experience and marginal performance is expected. At the advanced beginner stage, teachers are involved in the learning process; however, they lack



certain responsibility for their actions. At the competent stage, teachers are making conscious choices about what they are going to do, and they are able to decide what is and what is not important. The proficient stage is the stage at which teachers' intuition or know-how becomes easier to grasp. At the final stage, the expert stage, teachers seem to perform in an effortless manner, choosing what to attend to and what to do (Berliner, 1988). For the purpose of this study, the teacher participants chosen from each middle school will reflect the skills of beginner or seasoned teachers, as determined by their number of years teaching. It is important to note that Berliner (1988) makes mention that "the duration of time spent in a stage can be expected to vary widely." In other words, years of experience do not warrant a specific stage, since an individual who is at one stage may demonstrate characteristics of another stage (Berliner, 1988). Therefore, for this research study, teachers with one to three years of experience were considered *beginner*, since teachers are gaining experience and marginal performance is expected (Berliner, 1988); teachers with 15 or more years of experience were considered *seasoned*, since it is at this stage that teachers have developed a sense of "knowing how" to handle the classroom (Berliner, 1988). Stratified random sampling was used to generate a representation of beginner and seasoned ELA/R and SS teachers (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007).

### **Instrumentation**

The observation instrument that was used for this research was the TQG Classroom Observation Form (Comprehension and Vocabulary), which was modified in 2005 by William Rupley, Ph.D., professor at Texas A&M University in College Station, TX (see Appendix B). The TQG instrument was selected because it can be modified to specifically address the comprehension, comprehension instruction, and vocabulary components of this

research study. The TQG instrument consists of queries pertaining to *before/during/after* reading comprehension activities, vocabulary instructional strategies/practices, class grouping arrangements and text reading, and materials that were used to deliver instruction. One of the strategies, activating prior knowledge, is found on both comprehension and vocabulary sections of the instrument. The strategy listed under the comprehension section is defined as “the teacher/student activates prior knowledge and/or previews texts before reading (e.g., shares background information about the title, author, content, reviews relevant content from previous lessons, picture walk, makes predictions, makes connections),” while the strategy for vocabulary is defined as “the teacher activates prior knowledge by using before reading strategy (e.g., semantic features analysis map, word web).” The main difference between the strategy in the comprehension section and the strategy in the vocabulary section is the use of the strategy with text or vocabulary.

### **Validity**

Rupley (2005) conducted trial observations to validate the instrument. The teacher comprehension and vocabulary practices in Rupley’s study were also used by the researcher (see Appendix B). The interviews that were conducted with the participants were based on question protocols created by the researcher and reviewed and approved by the researcher’s committee chair and co-chair. Non-participating teachers were requested to review the questionnaire and instrument and provide input regarding the clarity and appropriateness of the instruments. All agreed that it was clear and appropriate for the study.

### **Reliability**

The reliability involving the use of the TQG Classroom Observation Form was made possible by Rupley, who applied Cronbach’s Alpha, Split-Half, and Spearman-Brown

prediction formula through a survey of the teacher literary practices found in the instrument. The results of the three measures were compared to determine the consistency of the teachers' literary practices. It was determined that the results of the overall three measures were consistent: Cronbach's Alpha - .78; Split-Half - .76, and Spearman-Brown prediction formula - .87. This was considered appropriate.

### **Observations**

Observations assist the researcher to note body language and other gestural cues that provide meaning to the words of the individuals being interviewed (Angrosino, 2005). Of the three types of observation procedures that include descriptive, focused, or selective observations, the researcher utilized focused observation, which allowed for a greater concentration on the pertinent material of the research study (Angrosino, 2005). The use of observations allowed for the study to have objectivity, validation, and replicability (Angrosino, 2005). The three constructs of objectivity, validation, and replicability helped the study reveal valid and reliable data by portraying a scenario of what transpires during the observations. For example, by using the TQG (2005) instrument, the researcher was able to observe if teachers were teaching comprehension instruction by implementing reading strategies.

The researcher conducted three observations of each teacher at each middle school with the randomly selected teachers to collect the data. A total of 36 unannounced, audio-taped observations were conducted during one school year in ELA/R and SS classes. The observations, which lasted approximately 45 minutes each, were carried out during different class periods each day for each teacher participant, and at different times during the 90-minute class period. The researcher visited the participants' classrooms at different times,

either at the beginning, middle or end of the class period, when conducting the observations, in order to view the participants' actions at different times of the class period. Research states that a researcher should try and visit the setting of the study at different times of the day "to see how participants' actions may vary at different times of the day" (Kawulich, 2005).

### **Interviews**

Interviews are a common and powerful way to understand humans (Fontana & Frey, 2005). Interviews continue to be used by qualitative and quantitative researchers as the "basic method of data gathering" (Fontana & Frey, 2005). Most qualitative research is based on interviews because interviews help the researcher describe aspects of reality that would otherwise be unobtainable (Perakyla, 2005). With interviews, an interviewer can build trust and rapport with the respondents, thereby obtaining information that probably would not be made known by the individual (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007). The interviews assisted the researcher in determining the extent of teachers' knowledge about comprehension in order to provide comprehension instruction in their classes.

The researcher conducted a total of 12 individual interviews with the participants after the observations were completed. The interviews, which lasted approximately 30 minutes each, followed a protocol of questions (see Appendix A). The researcher also conducted member checks, a method used to ask participants to confirm their answers to the interview questions, in order to convey the data as accurately as possible (Miller, & Crabtree, 2005).

### **Questionnaires**

Questionnaires assist the researcher in collecting data about phenomena that may not be directly observable (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007), such as teachers' understanding or knowledge

of comprehension instruction strategies. Questionnaires ask the same questions of all the sample participants; respondents' answers may be in the form of a written or typed response to the questions (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007). The data from the questionnaires provided the researcher with insight regarding teachers' knowledge of comprehension instruction and the types of reading comprehension strategies the teachers utilized to provide comprehension instruction to the students. The data also provided the researcher with information regarding the teachers' perceptions of a good reader, and the process that teachers utilized to teach students reading strategies to facilitate their understanding of texts.

A questionnaire (Appendix C) was administered to each research participant after the observations were completed. The questionnaire included an open-ended question. The responses were used to determine the participants' perceptions concerning the staff development training they had received pertaining to reading comprehension strategies. The questionnaire allowed the researcher to establish rapport with the respondents and explain any unclear items (Gay & Airasian, 1992).

### **Data Analysis Procedures**

The field notes taken on each observation were reviewed carefully and tallies were noted. Tallies were counted to determine what types of reading comprehension instruction were being used by teachers and the time spent on such activities. The TQG instrument was used in conducting this analysis. To answer Questions 1-8 of the study, tables were used to illustrate the different comprehension-related strategies and vocabulary instructional strategies/practices. Data from the observations were reported in terms of minutes and corresponding percentages of the total observation time (1,561 minutes). Data collected from the observations using the TQG instrument were organized in a contingency table to address

Question 9, which called for a comparison between the observed and expected frequencies involving comprehension instruction and vocabulary instructional strategies utilized by the participants. Chi-square tests were used to determine whether there were any significant differences between the observed and expected frequencies, (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007). Strategies pertaining to the *before reading* category included: The teacher/student activates prior knowledge and/or previews text before reading; the *before, during or after reading* strategies included: Instruction using text features; using text structure to teach/identify compare-contrast, cause effect, or problem-solution; explicit comprehension instruction that teaches students how to use strategies such as main idea, summarizing, drawing conclusions, visualizing events, evaluating predictions, identifying fact vs. opinion, sequencing, and monitoring for comprehension; explicit comprehension instruction that teaches students how to generate questions and justify or elaborate their responses, and the strategies in the *during or after reading* category included: Teacher asks questions based on text material that require one of the following: making inferences, summarizing/finding main ideas, drawing conclusions, or some other complex skill; and teacher elaborates, clarifies, or links concepts during text reading.

Interview data were categorized to identify patterns, themes, and repetition of words or key words that may reveal similarities of participants' strategy instruction, use of phrases or sentences. Categorizing the data allowed the researcher to note patterns or themes occurring among the majority of the participants from the interviews (Perakyla, 2005). The social interactions from the interviews enabled the researcher to study any similarities the actions may have suggested. The technique of content analysis, a method by which researchers examine artifacts of social communication, assisted in identifying, organizing, indexing, and

retrieving data (Berg, 2007). Content analysis allowed the researcher to better understand the perspective(s) of the interviewee(s) (Berg, 2007). Therefore, utilizing content analysis helped the researcher “listen to the words of the text” (Berg, 2007) in order to analyze the data and “organize it according to certain content elements” (Berg, 2007), such as the patterns or themes that occurred. Two types of coding that were used by the researcher were open coding and axial coding to accomplish content analysis. Open coding refers to the researcher reading the interview information carefully “to determine the concepts and categories that fit the data.” Axial coding involves sorting, organizing and categorizing the data in order to interpret any patterns that were offered in the responses to the interview questions (Berg, 2007).

## **CHAPTER IV**

### **ANALYSIS OF DATA AND RESULTS**

This chapter presents and analyzes the data collected to study reading comprehension and vocabulary instruction in ELA/R and SS classrooms in four South Texas middle schools.

#### **Research Sample**

This study was conducted at four middle school campuses in a South Texas school district. Six ELA/R teachers and six SS teachers participated in the study. The teachers had a combined total of 172 years of teaching experience. Ten research participants attained a Bachelor's degree and two research participants completed a Master's degree; one participant with a Master's degree was an ELA/R teacher, the other was a SS teacher. Three of the participants had a generalist 4-8 certification. The other nine participants were certified in the content area they were currently teaching.

Table 1 illustrates the individual teachers' training on reading comprehension strategies.



Table 1

*Teacher Trainings in Reading Comprehension*

	Region Education Service Center	District-based staff development	Campus-based staff development	Department/ faculty meetings	College/ university courses
Teacher 1	√	√	√	√	√
Teacher 2	√	√	√	√	√
Teacher 3	√	√	√	√	
Teacher 4	√	√	√	√	
Teacher 5	√	√	√	√	√
Teacher 6					
Teacher 7	√	√	√	√	√
Teacher 8	√				
Teacher 9		√	√	√	√
Teacher 10	√	√	√	√	
Teacher 11	√	√	√	√	
Teacher 12	√	√	√		

A total of 11 teachers participated in at least one Region Education Service Center workshop, 10 participated in at least one district-based staff development, campus-based staff development, and/or department/faculty meetings. Only five teachers completed at least one college-level course in reading comprehension through college/university courses. Four teachers participated in all five types of training; five teachers participated in four out of the five types of training. One teacher, seasoned SS, participated in three out of the five types of training; one teacher, beginner SS, participated in one out of the five types of training, and one teacher, seasoned ELAR, had not participated in any kind of training on reading

comprehension strategies. The beginner SS teacher who attended one type of training, and the seasoned ELA/R teacher who did not receive training on reading comprehension strategies, did not implement any comprehension or vocabulary practices during any of the three times each one was observed. Although these two teachers did not implement any comprehension or vocabulary practices during the times they were observed, an additional five teachers, who attended at least three or more types of training, did not teach any comprehension or vocabulary activities during the three times they were observed either. As a result, attendance at the trainings does not seem to make much of a difference in applying comprehension or vocabulary practices in the ELA/R or SS classrooms.

### **Analysis of Research Questions**

The first four research questions posed for this study were primarily aimed at determining whether reading comprehension instruction was being implemented in ELA/R and SS classrooms at the middle school level. The next four research questions were intended to determine whether vocabulary instruction was being implemented as part of facilitating the comprehension process. The research questions also aimed at determining whether ELA/R and SS middle school teachers differed significantly in the frequency with which they used comprehension and vocabulary strategies to facilitate students' comprehension of grade-level text. The researcher observed each participant on three occasions. An observation form (Appendix B) was used to note the teachers' practices pertaining to comprehension and vocabulary instructional strategies. Using these results, the researcher examined the information to determine the extent of reading comprehension and vocabulary instruction implemented in the classrooms.

The research questions are as follows: 1) What is the amount and percent of instructional

time that teachers spend implementing reading comprehension instructional strategies during 7<sup>th</sup> grade ELA/R and SS instruction? 2) Is there a difference between the amount of time ELA/R and SS teachers implement comprehension instructional practices? 3) Is there a difference between the amount of time beginner and seasoned teachers implement comprehension instructional practices? 4) Are there differences among beginner ELA/R, seasoned ELA/R, beginner SS and seasoned SS teachers, in the amount of time they teach comprehension instructional practices? 5) What is the amount and percent of instructional time that teachers spend implementing vocabulary instructional activities during ELA/R and SS instruction? 6) Is there a difference between the amount of time ELA/R and SS teachers implement vocabulary instructional activities? 7) Is there a difference between the amount of time beginner and seasoned teachers implement vocabulary instructional activities? 8) Are there differences among beginner ELA/R, seasoned ELA/R, beginner SS and seasoned SS teachers, in the amount of time they teach vocabulary instructional activities? 9) Do ELA/R and SS teachers differ significantly in the frequency with which they implement reading comprehension and vocabulary instructional strategies to facilitate students' comprehension of texts? The results pertaining to each question are reported below in tabular form followed by an explanatory statement.

## **Observations of Comprehension Instruction**

### **Research question 1**

What is the amount and percent of instructional time that teachers spend implementing reading comprehension instructional strategies during 7<sup>th</sup> grade ELA/R and SS instruction?

Table 2 presents the amount of time in minutes and seconds, and the percent of observed instructional time all teachers were engaged with comprehension activities. The time for all

participants has been converted to reveal the percent of time the teachers spent on comprehension activities. The total observation time was 1,561 minutes.

Table 2

*All Participants: Amount and percent of time spent in various comprehension activities*

Before Reading	All Participants	
	Time	Percent
1. Activates prior knowledge	51m	3%
Before, During, After Reading		
2. Using text features	0	0
3. Using text structure	0	0
4a. Explicit strategies instruction	0	0
4b. Explicit question-generating instruction	0	0
5. Asks students to justify or elaborate their responses	6m	<1%
During or After Reading		
6. Teacher questioning	22m	1%
7. Teacher elaboration and explanation	0	0
Total minutes comprehension observed/Percent	79m	5%

*Note:* Total observation time = 1,561 min. Minutes were rounded to the nearest whole minute; percents were rounded to the nearest whole percent.

Table 2 reported that comprehension practices were observed for a total of approximately 79 minutes. This accounted for 5% of the 1,561 minutes of the total observation time for all 12 teachers participating in the study. Out of the 79 minutes of observed comprehension instruction practices, 51 minutes was spent on activating prior knowledge and/or previewing text before reading. This activity accounted for 65% of all comprehension activities that were observed during the study. Teachers spent approximately 22 minutes asking questions,

which accounted for 28% of all comprehension practices. Therefore, 92% of observed comprehension practices was spent in two types of instructional activity, and 8% (6 minutes) was spent on asking students to justify/elaborate responses.

### **Research question 2**

Is there a difference between the amount of time ELA/R and SS teachers implement comprehension instructional practices?

Table 3 presents the amount of time in minutes and seconds, and the percent of observed instructional time ELA/R and SS teachers spent on comprehension instructional practices. The teachers were separated into their content areas, ELA/R or SS, to indicate any differences in time they spent on comprehension practices in each of the subject areas. The time for each group of teachers has been converted to reveal the percent of time the teachers spent on comprehension practices. The total observation time was 776 minutes for ELA/R teachers and 785 minutes for SS teachers.

Table 3

*ELA/R and SS Participants: Amount and percent of time spent in various comprehension activities*

Before Reading	ELA/R		Social Studies	
	Time	Percent	Time	Percent
1. Activates prior knowledge	39m	5%	12m	2%
Before, During, After Reading				
2. Using text features	0	0	0	0
3. Using text structure	0	0	0	0
4a. Explicit strategies instruction	0	0	0	0
4b. Explicit question-generating instruction	0	0	0	0
5. Asks students to justify or elaborate their responses	2m	<1%	4m	<1%
During or After Reading				
6. Teacher questioning	22m	3%	0	0
7. Teacher elaboration and explanation	0	0	0	0
Total minutes observed/Percent	63m	8%	16m	2%

*Note.* Total observation time = 776 min. for ELA/R and 785 min. for SS. Minutes were rounded to the nearest whole minute; percents were rounded to nearest whole percent.

Table 3 revealed that comprehension activities were observed for a total of 63 minutes, or 8% of the 776 minutes total time observed among ELA/R teachers. These participants spent 39 minutes of the time observed, on activating prior knowledge. This activity accounted for 62% of all comprehension practices that were observed among ELA/R teachers. ELA/R teachers spent 22 minutes asking questions, which accounted for 35% of comprehension practices observed among ELA/R teachers. As a result, 97% of observed comprehension practices among ELA/R teachers was spent in two types of instructional activity, and 3% (2 minutes) was spent on asking students to justify/elaborate responses.

Table 3 also revealed that comprehension activities were observed for a total of 16 minutes, or 2%, of the 785 minutes total time observed among SS teachers. SS participants

spent 12 minutes, or 2%, of the time observed, on activating prior knowledge, which accounted for 75% of all comprehension procedures that were observed among SS teachers. These participants spent 4 minutes, or 1%, of the time observed, on asking students to justify/elaborate responses. This activity accounted for 25% of comprehension practices that were observed among SS teachers.

Data from Table 3 indicate that the ELA/R teachers spent four times as much time on comprehension activities, 63 minutes, than SS teachers, 16 minutes. Two beginner ELA/R teachers accounted for most of the comprehension practices observed, 55 minutes out of the total 79 total minutes of comprehension activities observed. Since most of the comprehension taught was implemented by ELA/R teachers, the data could indicate that perhaps the subject of reading is expected to be taught in the ELA/R classes rather than the SS classes. The difference between the time spent on comprehension practices by ELA/R and SS teachers could suggest that Reading teachers may be better prepared to address reading comprehension instruction than SS teachers. The difference could further suggest that there is a greater expectation for Reading teachers to teach reading comprehension instead of SS teachers.

### **Research question 3**

Is there a difference between the amount of time beginner and seasoned teachers implement comprehension instructional practices?

Table 4 demonstrates the amount of time beginner and seasoned teachers spent on comprehension practices, and the percent equivalent to that time. Table 4 shows the time and percent the different groups of teachers spent on comprehension activities. The total

observation time was 786 minutes for beginner teachers and 775 minutes for seasoned teachers.

Table 4

*Beginner and Seasoned Teacher Participants: Amount and percent of time spent in various comprehension activities*

Before Reading	Beginner		Seasoned	
	Time	Percent	Time	Percent
1. Activates prior knowledge	39m	5%	12m	2%
Before, During or After Reading				
2. Uses text features	0	0	0	0
3. Uses text structure	0	0	0	0
4a. Explicit strategies instruction	0	0	0	0
4b. Explicit question-generating instruction	0	0	0	0
5. Asks students to justify or elaborate their responses	6m	1%	0	0
During or After Reading				
6. Teacher questioning	22m	3%	0	0
7. Teacher elaboration and explanation	0	0	0	0
Total minutes observed/Percent	67m	9%	12m	2%

*Note:* Total observation time = 786 min. for Beginner teachers; 775 minutes for Seasoned teachers. Minutes were rounded to the nearest whole minute; percents were rounded to the nearest whole percent.

Table 4 shows a comparison of comprehension practices between beginner and seasoned teachers. Data indicate that beginner teachers spent 67 minutes, or 9% of the total observed time for beginner teachers (786 minutes), on comprehension instructional behaviors, while seasoned teachers spent 12 minutes, or 2% of the total time observed for seasoned teachers (775 minutes) on comprehension activities. The beginner teachers spent 11 hours and 16



minutes of the observation time, or 86%, on non-comprehension related instruction, whereas seasoned teachers devoted 11 hours and 25 minutes, or 88%, on non-comprehension instructional practices. Although beginner and seasoned teachers spent most of their comprehension instructional time on activating prior knowledge, beginner teachers spent approximately three times as much time on this strategy than seasoned teachers. Table 4 also shows beginner teachers spent 22 minutes, or 3%, of the total time observed, on teacher questioning; this activity accounted for 33% of comprehension activities that was observed among beginner teachers. The seasoned teachers did not spend any time on teacher questioning. Additionally, the data indicate that beginner teachers seemed to teach comprehension more than five times the amount of time spent by seasoned teachers, and that most of the seasoned teachers' time, 39 minutes of the 67 minutes total time spent on comprehension, and all of the beginner teachers' time, 12 minutes of the 12 minutes total time spent on comprehension, was spent on activating prior knowledge.

#### **Research question 4**

Are there differences among beginner ELA/R, seasoned ELA/R, beginner SS and seasoned SS teachers, in the amount of time they teach comprehension instructional practices?

Table 5 presents the amount of time and the percent of observed instructional time beginner ELA/R, seasoned ELA/R, beginner SS and seasoned SS teachers spent on comprehension instructional practices. The total observation time was 387 minutes for beginner ELA/R teachers, 389 minutes for seasoned ELA/R teachers, 399 minutes for beginner SS teachers and 386 minutes for seasoned SS teachers.

Table 5

*Beginner ELA/R and SS & Seasoned ELA/R and SS Participants: Amount and percent of time spent in various comprehension activities*

Before Reading	Beginner				Seasoned			
	ELA/R		S.S.		ELA/R		S.S.	
	Time	%	Time	%	Time	%	Time	%
1. Activates prior knowledge	39m	10%	0	0	0	0	12m	3%
Before, During or After Reading								
2. Uses text features	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
3. Uses text structure	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
4a. Explicit strategies instruction	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
4b. Explicit question-generating instruction	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
5. Asks students to justify or elaborate their responses	2m	1%	4m	1%	0	0	0	0
During or After Reading								
6. Teacher questioning	22m	6%	0	0	0	0	0	0
7. Teacher elaboration and explanation	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total minutes observed/Percent	63m	16%	4m	1%	0	0	12m	3%

*Note.* Total observation time = 387 min. for Beginner ELA/R; 389 min. for Seasoned ELA/R; 399 min. for Beginner SS; 386 min. for Seasoned SS. Minutes were rounded to the nearest whole minute; percents were rounded to nearest whole percent.

Table 5 revealed that beginner ELA/R teachers spent 63 minutes, or 16% of the total 387 minutes this group of teachers were observed, on comprehension procedures. However, the seasoned ELA/R teachers were not observed teaching comprehension during the 389

minutes, or approximately 6 hours and 29 minutes, observation time. The beginner SS teachers spent four minutes, or 1% of the total 399 minutes observed, on comprehension activities. In a similar fashion, the seasoned SS teachers spent 12 minutes, or 3% of the total 386 minutes this group was observed, on comprehension procedures. Additionally, even though the beginner ELA/R participants spent most of the time, 39 minutes, or 2% of the total time observed (1,561 minutes), on activating prior knowledge, neither the beginner ELA/R teachers nor the beginner SS teachers spent any significant time on comprehension instructional practices beyond activating prior knowledge and teacher questioning. The 39 minutes that the beginner ELA/R teachers devoted to activating prior knowledge accounts for 62% of the total 63 minutes of comprehension activities that were observed among that group. Five out of the 12 teachers, three beginner ELA/R, one beginner SS, and one seasoned SS, were the only participants who spent time on comprehension activities; more than half of the teachers did not implement any comprehension procedures.

Furthermore, the three beginner ELA/R teachers accounted for the 63 minutes of comprehension practices observed; one implemented 34 minutes, another one implemented 21 minutes, and the third one implemented eight minutes of comprehension activities. One beginner SS teacher accounted for four minutes of comprehension observed, and only one seasoned S teacher implemented comprehension practices for a total of 12 minutes.

The observation form (Appendix B) was also used to document the teachers' implementation of vocabulary instruction. Below, in tabular form, are the results pertaining to vocabulary instruction. An explanatory statement follows each table.

### **Research question 5**

What is the amount and percent of instructional time that teachers spend implementing

vocabulary instructional activities during ELA/R and SS instruction?

Table 6 presents the amount of time all participants spent on utilizing vocabulary instructional strategies in their classrooms. The amount of time was converted to the percent the teachers spent on using vocabulary strategies. The total observation time was 1,561 minutes.

Table 6

*All Participants: Amount and percent of time spent in various vocabulary activities*

Instructional Strategies/Practices	All Participants	
	Time	Percent
1. Teacher activates prior knowledge	0	0
2. Teacher provides explanation, definition, or example	15m	1%
3. Teacher elaborates or extends a definition	5m	<1%
4. Teacher uses visuals, gestures to discuss/demonstrate word meanings	0	0
5. Teacher teaches word learning strategies	2m	<1%
6. Students do something that requires knowledge of words	99m	6%
7. Teacher allows students to apply word learning strategies	0	0
Total minutes observed/Percent	121m	8%

*Note:* Total observation time = 1,561 min. Minutes were rounded to the nearest whole minute; percents were rounded to nearest whole percent.

Table 6 revealed that vocabulary strategies were implemented for approximately 121 minutes, 8%, of the total time observed for all participants (1,561 minutes). Participants spent 99 minutes, or 6% of the time observed, on having students do something that required knowledge of words, e.g., students answered questions about words, analyzed words by

using prefixes or suffixes to determine definitions, used the Freyer model or context clues to define terms, or used words in written sentences. This activity accounted for 82% of vocabulary instruction that was observed among all participants. About 1% of the total time observed, or 18% of vocabulary instruction, was spent on the following strategies: providing an explanation, a definition, or an example; elaborating or extending a definition, and teaching word learning strategies – using context clues, word parts, root meaning.

### **Research question 6**

Is there a difference between the amount of time ELA/R and SS teachers spend implementing vocabulary instructional activities?

Table 7 demonstrates the amount of time and percent of observed instruction time ELA/R and SS teachers spent on vocabulary instructional activities. The total observation time was 776 minutes for ELA/R teachers and 785 minutes for SS teachers.

Table 7

*ELA/R and SS Participants: Amount and percent of time spent in various vocabulary activities*

Instructional Strategies/Practices	ELA/R		Social Studies	
	Time	Percent	Time	Percent
1. Teacher activates prior knowledge	0	0	0	0
2. Teacher provides explanation, definition or example.	5m	1%	10m	1%
3. Teacher elaborates or extends a definition.	4m	1%	28s	<1%
4. Teacher uses visuals, gestures to discuss/demonstrate word meanings.	0	0	0	0
5. Teacher teaches word learning strategies	2m	<1%	0	0
6. Students do something that requires knowledge of words	72m	9%	27m	3%
7. Teacher allows students to apply word learning strategies	0	0	0	0
Total minutes observed/Percent	83m	11%	38m	5%

*Note.* Total observation time = 776 min. for ELA/R; 785 min. for SS. Minutes were rounded to the nearest whole minute; percents were rounded to nearest whole percent.

Table 7 indicates that vocabulary practices were implemented during 83 minutes, 11%, of the 776 minutes observed among ELA/R teachers, and 38 minutes, 5%, of the 785 minutes observed among SS teachers. ELA/R teachers spent 72 minutes, or 9%, of the 776 minutes observed, on having students do something that required knowledge of words, e.g., students answered questions about words, defined words, made sentences with words, or used context clues to define words, whereas the SS teachers spent 27 minutes on the same practice. About 1% of the time observed was spent on providing an explanation, a definition, or an example, and 1% was also spent on elaborating or extending a definition.

Data further indicates that the ELA/R teachers spent more than twice as much time on

vocabulary practices, 83 minutes, than SS teachers, who spent 38 minutes on vocabulary activities. A seasoned ELA/R teacher implemented 68 minutes of the 83 minutes observed for vocabulary practices, and a beginner SS teacher implemented 28 minutes of the 38 minutes observed for vocabulary practices.

### **Research question 7**

Is there a difference between the amount of time beginner and seasoned teachers spend implementing vocabulary instructional activities?

Table 8 shows the amount of time beginner and seasoned teachers spent on implementing vocabulary instructional activities in their classrooms. The table also indicates the amount of time converted to the percent spent on vocabulary procedures. The total observation time was 786 minutes for beginner teachers and 775 minutes for seasoned teachers.

Table 8

*Beginner and Seasoned Teacher Participants: Amount and percent of time spent in various vocabulary activities*

Instructional Strategies/Practices	Beginner		Seasoned	
	Time	Percent	Time	Percent
1. Teacher activates prior knowledge	0	0	0	0
2. Teacher provides explanation, definition or example.	11m	1%	4m	1%
3. Teacher elaborates or extends a definition.	0	0	4m	1%
4. Teacher uses visuals, gestures to discuss/demonstrate word meanings.	0	0	0	0
5. Teacher teaches word learning strategies	32s	<1%	2m	<1%
6. Students do something that requires knowledge of words	31m	4%	68m	9%
7. Teacher allows students to apply word learning strategies	0	0	0	0
Total minutes observed/Percent	43m	5%	78m	10%

*Note:* Total observation time = 786 min. for Beginner teachers; 775 min. for Seasoned teachers. Minutes were rounded to the nearest whole minute; percents were rounded to the nearest whole percent.

Table 8 revealed vocabulary practices were implemented during 43 minutes, 5%, of the total time observed (786 minutes) among beginner participants, while seasoned teachers spent 78 minutes, 10%, of the total time observed (775 minutes) on these types of instructional practices. Beginner and seasoned participants spent approximately 99 minutes, or 6% of the total time observed (1,561 minutes), on having students do something that requires knowledge of words, e.g., students answered questions about words, defined words by using prefixes or suffixes to provide definitions, used the Freyer model or context clues to



define terms, or made sentences with words. This activity accounted for 80% of vocabulary instruction among both groups. Both beginner and seasoned participants spent less than 2% of the total time observed (1,561 minutes) on the following strategies: providing an explanation, a definition, or an example, and elaborating or extending a definition.

### **Research question 8**

Are there differences among beginner ELA/R, seasoned ELA/R, beginner SS and seasoned SS teachers, in the amount of time they teach vocabulary instructional activities?

Table 9 reveals the amount of time and percent of observed instructional time beginner ELA/R, beginner SS, seasoned ELA/R and seasoned SS teachers spent on vocabulary instructional activities. The total observation time was 387 minutes for beginner ELA/R teachers, 389 minutes for seasoned ELA/R teachers, 399 minutes for beginner SS teachers and 386 minutes for seasoned SS teachers.

Table 9

*Beginner ELA/R and SS & Seasoned ELA/R and SS Teachers: Amount and percent of time spent in various vocabulary activities*

Instructional Strategies/Practices	Beginner				Seasoned			
	ELA/R		SS		ELA/R		SS	
	Time	%	Time	%	Time	%	Time	%
1. Teacher activates prior knowledge	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
2. Teacher provides explanation, definition, or example.	2m	1%	9m	2%	3m	1%	20s	<1%
3. Teacher elaborates or extends a definition.	0	0	0	0	3m	1%	28s	<1%
4. Teacher uses visuals, gestures to discuss/demonstrate word meanings.	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
5. Teacher teaches word learning strategies	32s	<1%	0	0	2m	1%	0	0
6. Students do something that requires knowledge of words	4m	1%	28m	7%	68m	17%	0	0
7. Teacher allows students to apply word learning strategies	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total minutes observed/Percent	7m	2%	37m	9%	76m	20%	1m	<1%

*Note:* Total observation time = 387 min. for Beginner ELA/R; 389 min. for Seasoned ELA/R; 399 min. for Beginner SS; 386 min. for Seasoned SS. Minutes were rounded to the nearest whole minute; percents were rounded to nearest whole percent.

Table 9 showed that seasoned ELA/R participants spent 68 minutes, or 17%, of the total 389 minutes observed, on having students do something that required knowledge of words, e.g., students answered questions about words, defined words, made sentences with words, or used context clues to define words; the beginner SS teachers spent 28 minutes, or 7%, of the total 399 minutes observed, on the same vocabulary practice. The 68 minutes that the seasoned ELA/R teachers spent on having students do something that required knowledge of

words accounted for 88% of the total 77 minutes this group spent on vocabulary activities. Beginner ELA/R participants spent 4 minutes, or 1% of the total 387 minutes observed, on this strategy. This accounted for 57% of the total 7 minutes this group spent on vocabulary activities. Although beginner and seasoned ELA/R participants spent less than 2% of the time observed on teaching word learning strategies – using context clues, word parts, root meaning, the beginner and seasoned SS teachers were not observed teaching any word learning strategies.

To sum up Table 9, beginner ELA/R teachers spent a total of 7 minutes, or 2% of the 387 minutes observed, on implementing vocabulary practices, and seasoned ELA/R teachers devoted a total of 76 minutes, or 20% of the 389 minutes of observed vocabulary instruction. Even though beginner SS teachers spent a total of 37 minutes, or 9% of the 399 minutes observed, on implementing vocabulary practices, seasoned SS teachers dedicated a total of only 1 minute, or less than 1% of the 386 minutes observed, to this type of instruction.

### **Research question 9**

Do ELA/R and SS teachers differ significantly in the frequency with which they implement reading comprehension and vocabulary instructional strategies to facilitate students' comprehension of texts?

After completing three observations of 45 minutes each of 6 ELA/R and 6 SS teachers, the researcher had planned to compute Chi square analyses to determine if there were any significant differences between the observed and expected frequencies of ELA/R and SS teachers implementing comprehension and vocabulary instructional strategies to facilitate students' comprehension of texts. A careful analysis of the distribution of the data revealed that a chi square analysis was inappropriate to determine if there were any significant

differences between the observed and expected frequencies of the teachers implementing comprehension and vocabulary strategies to facilitate students' comprehension of texts. This decision was deemed reasonable, since a key principle surrounding the use of chi square highlights the importance of having a large number of observations ([http://www.basic.northwestern.edu/statguidefiles/gf-dist\\_ass\\_viol.html](http://www.basic.northwestern.edu/statguidefiles/gf-dist_ass_viol.html)). A close inspection of the data revealed that there was a very small number of observations, in reference to the observed frequencies, that showed teachers implementing comprehension and/or vocabulary practices, i.e., the teachers implemented comprehension and vocabulary strategies minimally during the observed time, therefore the researcher was unable to conduct a chi square analysis and thus possibly reject the null hypothesis.

Tables 10 and 11, respectively, present the frequencies of comprehension and vocabulary instructional practices as they occurred in the ELA/R or SS classrooms. Out of the 36 observations which lasted approximately 45 minutes each, teachers did not implement comprehension practices during 30 (or 83%) of the 36 classroom visits, and teachers did not implement vocabulary activities during 25 (or 72%) of the 36 classroom visits. Teachers implemented comprehension instructional practices during six of the 36 classroom visits, and implemented vocabulary instructional practices during 11 of the 36 classroom visits. During three of the observations, teachers implemented a combination of comprehension and vocabulary procedures in their lessons.

Two ELA/R teachers applied three comprehension instructional practices, which included: 1) activating prior knowledge; 2) asking students to justify/elaborate, and 3) asking questions. One ELA/R teacher applied two comprehension practices, which included: 1) activating prior knowledge and 2) asking questions. Three ELA/R teachers did not

implement any comprehension practices during the observations. Three ELA/R teachers applied vocabulary instructional practices. One ELA/R teacher applied three vocabulary instructional practices: 1) teacher provides explanation, definition, or example; 2) teacher teaches word learning strategies, and 3) students do something that requires knowledge of words, e.g., students answered questions about words, defined words by using prefixes or suffixes to provide definitions, used the Freyer model or context clues to define terms, or made sentences with words. Another ELA/R teacher applied three vocabulary instructional practices: 1) teacher provides explanation, definition, or example; 2) teacher elaborates or extends definition, and 3) students do something that requires knowledge of words, e.g., students answered questions about words, defined words by using prefixes or suffixes to provide definitions, used the Freyer model or context clues to define terms, or made sentences with words. The third ELA/R teacher applied the four vocabulary practices that the previous two ELA/R teachers implemented. Three ELA/R teachers did not implement any vocabulary practices during the observations.

Two SS instructors employed one comprehension practice each; one teacher implemented the practice of activating prior knowledge, and the other teacher applied the practice of asking students to justify/elaborate on their responses. Four SS teachers did not implement any comprehension practices during the observations. Three SS teachers implemented the vocabulary practice of the teacher providing an explanation, definition or example; of these three teachers, one implemented the practice of elaborating or extending a definition, and another one applied the practice of students doing something that requires knowledge of words, e.g., students answered questions about words, defined words, made sentences with words, or used context clues to define words. Three SS teachers did not implement any

vocabulary practices during the observations. To sum up, seven of the 12 teacher participants, three ELA/R and four SS, were not observed implementing comprehension practices during any of the observations. Additionally, six of the 12 teachers, three ELA/R and three SS, were not observed implementing vocabulary practices during any of the observations.

Table 10

*Frequencies of Comprehension Instructional Practices in ELA/R and SS Classrooms*

Teacher	Practices			Total
	Activates Prior Knowledge	Asks students to justify/elaborate	Asks questions	
ELA/R	3	2	4	9
Social Studies	1	6	0	7
Total	4	8	4	16

Table 11

*Frequencies of Vocabulary Instructional Practices in the ELA/R and SS Classrooms*

Teacher	Procedures				Total
	Teacher provides explanation, definition, example	Teacher elaborates or extends definition	Teacher teaches word learning strategies	Students do something that requires knowledge of words	
ELA/R	10	4	3	10	27
Social Studies	6	1	0	1	8
Total	16	5	3	11	35

Tables 2 and 6 clearly indicate the minimal amount of time that the teachers spent on comprehension or vocabulary activities. Table 2 shows that teachers spent 79 minutes, or 5%, of the 1,561 total minutes observed, on comprehension practices, and Table 6 demonstrates that teachers spent 121 minutes, or 8% of the 1,561 total minutes observed, on vocabulary activities.

Furthermore, data from the observations indicate that five teachers, out of 12 teachers who were observed, were the only participants to implement any type of comprehension practices during the total time observed, 1,561 minutes. The total time spent on comprehension activities by the five teachers was 79 minutes, 5% of the total time observed. The five teachers were comprised of four beginner teachers, three ELA/R and one SS, and one seasoned SS teacher. Two beginner ELA/R teachers spent the most time on comprehension practices during the total time observed; one of these ELA/R teachers spent 34 minutes on comprehension practices, while the other ELA/R teacher spent 21 minutes on comprehension activities. The other teachers who spent time on comprehension practices were a beginner ELA/R teacher who spent eight minutes on comprehension practices, and a beginner SS teacher, who spent four minutes on comprehension activities. The fifth teacher who spent time on implementing comprehension practices was a seasoned SS teacher, who spent 12 minutes on comprehension activities. From these results, it appears that beginner teachers did employ most of the comprehension practices observed, 67 total minutes, 4%, out of the 1,561 total minutes observed for all 12 teachers. The 67 minutes account for 85% of the total 79 minutes these five teachers spent on comprehension activities. Additionally, the data indicate that the three beginner ELA/R teachers spent six times more time on comprehension practices than any of the other groups: seasoned ELA/R, beginner SS, and seasoned SS.

## **Qualitative Analysis**

After the observations were completed, the researcher conducted individual interviews with the participants. Each interview was based on five open-ended questions presented in Appendix A. The purpose of the interview questions was to obtain information on the teachers' knowledge and practices of comprehension instruction. Hence, the responses to these questions provided an indication of the participants' understanding of comprehension instruction. Content analysis enabled the researcher to identify, organize, and categorize the responses into distinct patterns or themes (Berg, 2007).

### **Teacher 1**

At the beginning of the interview, Teacher 1 appeared nervous, but quickly switched her demeanor to one of confidence and certainty in her answers. Teacher 1 holds a bachelor's degree in education and was in her fourth year of teaching at the time of the interview. Her first teaching assignment was at this middle school, one of the four middle schools in a South Texas school district chosen for this study. Teacher 1 majored in English Language Arts & Reading, and has a minor in psychology. Her certification is in English Language Arts & Reading, 4-8 and 8-12. She has taught 7<sup>th</sup> grade for the past four years, and has attended training on reading comprehension through Region One Workshops, district-based staff development, campus-based staff development, department/faculty meetings, and college/university courses. She believes that the college and university courses influenced her teaching career the most. During the three observations, Teacher 1 was observed teaching comprehension practices for a total of 21 minutes and vocabulary procedures for 6 minutes. This accounted for 16% of the comprehension and 5% of the vocabulary practices that were observed. Teacher 1 implemented the comprehension strategies of activating prior



knowledge for 21 minutes, asking students to justify or elaborate their responses for about 1 minute, and asking questions for approximately 1 minute. She implemented the comprehensions strategies of providing an explanation, a definition, or an example for about 2 minutes, teaching word learning strategies for about 1 minute, and having students do something that requires knowledge of words for about 4 minutes. Teacher 1 was one of two teachers who spent the most time, 21 minutes of the total 128 minutes observed, on comprehension practices. It appears from the professional development this teacher has attended, she seems to have knowledge about comprehension instruction, as she was the only teacher, out of 12 participants, who mentioned that comprehension instruction involved the teacher modeling for students to understand text.

Open-Ended Question #1: What are some qualities you think a good reader should have?

Teacher 1 was quick to mention that a good reader has stamina, adding that a good reader “keeps focused and doesn’t lose track of what they’re reading. They push themselves to read and focus on what they are reading.” She also noted that good readers “question themselves by asking, ‘Do I have to go back and reread?’ They are checking for understanding.”

Teacher 1 made reference to good readers having fluency by saying, “They also have fluency; they read with intonation, they don’t read like a robot, they are not monotonous.”

Open-ended Question #2: In your own words, describe what reading comprehension instruction entails.

Teacher 1 said comprehension instruction meant “being specific with each student; there is not one strategy that will help all students to comprehend. It means monitoring their progress, growth. It’s one-to-one instruction. It’s also modeling – how does teacher understand? – ‘This is how I do it’ – so she can pass on to students.”

Open-ended Question #3: Do you implement comprehension instruction? If so, describe examples of how you provide this type of instruction,

For this question, Teacher 1 stated that she implements comprehension instruction through modeling, marginal notes, and setting a purpose for reading. “I do modeling. I also have students take marginal notes. I explain to students that it’s important to set a purpose for reading – why they are reading.” She also mentioned that she explains to her students to read the various reading genres in different ways. “They need to differentiate between the types of reading genres.”

Open-ended Question #4: What are some of the reading comprehension strategies you teach in your reading class?

Teacher 1 was very brief in answering this question, and noted three strategies she teaches in her reading class. “I use marginal notes, context clues, and rereading.”

Open-ended Question #5: Describe the process you use to teach students reading strategies to facilitate their understanding of what they read.

A practice that Teacher 1 felt was important in the process she uses to teach reading strategies to facilitate understanding is exposing the students to different genres. It seems Teacher 1 understands the terms “genre” and “text structure” to mean the same, as she responded, “I expose them to different genres – science fiction, expository, informative, not just stories that are narrative.” She continued to explain the process, “I explain that they need to internalize what they are learning and bring it [what they have learned] to other classes and use it [what they have learned]. I explain to them that strategies can go vertical, in other words, to next grade level and subject areas.”

## **Teacher 2**

Teacher 2 was soft-spoken during the interview. He holds bachelor and master degrees, with his major being Languages. His certifications include Secondary English, 6-12, and English as a Second Language Supplement. Teacher 2 did not reveal the number of years he had been teaching at the middle school where he was presently teaching. He was in his 21<sup>st</sup> year of teaching experience at the time of this interview. He has attended training on reading comprehension through Region One workshops, district-based staff development, campus-based staff development, department/faculty meetings, and college/university courses. He mentioned that the college courses have influenced his teaching the most. During three observations, Teacher 2 spent 9 minutes on vocabulary practices, which accounted for 7% of the total minutes observed. Teacher 2 did not spend any time on comprehension practices. The vocabulary strategies he implemented included providing an explanation, a definition, or an example for about 1 minute; elaborating or extending a definition for approximately 2 minutes, and having students do something that requires knowledge of words for about 3 minutes. Although Teacher 2 has participated in at least one training on reading comprehension at five different entities, this teacher did not seem to reflect knowledge on comprehension instruction, but rather mentioned comprehension-related behaviors, such as paraphrasing and understanding author's purpose, when describing comprehension instruction.

Open-ended Question #1: What are some qualities you think a good reader should have?

Teacher 2 mentioned that a good reader should have "language acquisition; if they don't understand language, they don't understand what they read. The understanding of language is key for a good reader. It's not just reading words."

Open-ended Question #2: In your own words, describe what reading comprehension instruction entails.

Teacher 2 included “understanding” in his reply and stated that comprehension instruction is the “ability to read and understand what you’ve read and be able to paraphrase it. It’s understanding the author’s purpose and application process.”

Open-ended Question #3: Do you implement reading comprehension instruction? If so, describe examples of how you provide this type of instruction.

For this question, Teacher 2 was quick to remark that he did implement reading comprehension instruction and said that Region One Education Service Center was helpful in training him on implementing reading comprehension instruction. “I do [implement] reading comprehension instruction. I use leading questions to get at the heart of what the author is saying.”

Open-ended Question #4: What are some of the reading comprehension strategies you teach in your reading class?

Teacher 2 mentioned the KWL chart, Get-the-gist, TNT strategies and summarize as strategies he uses in his reading class. TNT denotes There for T and Not There for NT. TNT Reading Strategies was a process created by Martha Morales Consulting Company from Zapata, Texas, which targeted improving reading comprehension on the state exam. The process involved the students reading the questions on the reading exam first, and then looking for clues that assisted them in denoting a “T” question or a “NT” question. Clues such as “In Paragraph 5....,” would signal the student to place a “T” next to the question. After labeling all the questions, students would answer the questions that were labeled “T” by skimming the paragraph the clue indicated, and either skip the “NT” questions or guess at

answering them. In the mid-2000s, the school district in which this study was conducted hired the Martha Morales Consulting Company to provide training to teachers on using the TNT method to help improve reading scores on the state exam. Teacher participants in this study may have participated in at least one of the training sessions provided by the Martha Morales Consulting Company. If the teacher did not participate in the training, it was due to the teacher being absent from the training, as all middle schools participated in the training at their campus.

Open-ended Question #5: Describe the process you use to teach students reading strategies to facilitate their understanding of what they read.

Teacher 2 cited assessment, re-teaching and repetition as techniques for teaching reading strategies to facilitate text understanding. “I use assessment to see what they’ve learned and if there’s a need to reteach, nothing wrong with re-teaching.”

### **Teacher 3**

Teacher 3 appeared worried at first, but gained her confidence as she answered Question #1, and maintained her self-assurance throughout the interview. Teacher 3 holds a bachelor’s degree with majors in English and Spanish. She is certified in Elementary Self-Contained, 1-8; Elementary Spanish, 1-8, and Bilingual/ESL, 1-8. Teacher 3 was in her 33<sup>rd</sup> year of teaching at the time of the interview. She has spent her 33 years of teaching in the English Language Arts content area at the same middle school. Teacher 3 has attended training on reading comprehension through Region One Workshops, district-based staff development, campus-based staff development, and department/faculty meetings. She believes the training sessions on strategies for teaching LEP (Language English Seasoned) students have influenced her teaching the most. Teacher 3 spent 68 minutes, of the 131 total minutes

observed, on vocabulary practices. This accounted for 52% of the total time observed. She did not spend any time on comprehension procedures. The vocabulary practices included providing an explanation, a definition, or an example, for about 2 minutes; elaborating or extending a definition, for about 1 minute; teaching word learning strategies for about 2 minutes, and having students do something that requires knowledge of words, for approximately 63 minutes. Teacher 3 has participated in at least one type of reading comprehension training at four different entities, however, she did not seem to be able to define comprehension instruction, but rather mentioned what students are expected to do with understanding text, such as “in end, see overall picture, underlying themes.” Teacher 3 was one of two teachers who spent the most time, 68 minutes of the total 131 minutes observed, on vocabulary practices. She did seem to have knowledge that vocabulary is critical for comprehension, as she stated, “[I] elaborate on vocabulary if they don’t know, [I] reinforce vocabulary with a visual picture so they can see what it is, and use word itself.”

Open-ended Question #1: What are some qualities you think a good reader should have?

Teacher 3 noted comprehension of text and knowledge of vocabulary as two important qualities of a good reader. They should “be able to understand what they read, and have some familiarity with vocabulary in order to pronounce words correctly.” According to Teacher 3, good readers should also have some type of grammar knowledge. Students should “be able to know the difference between punctuation marks. When unfamiliar with a word, they should know concept of rules of grammar to help them pronounce words correctly.”

Open-ended Question #2: In your own words, describe what reading comprehension instruction entails.

Teacher 3 described reading comprehension instruction as a “love of reading.” She added that comprehension instruction involves the ability to make interpretations. Comprehension instruction is “being able to picture what you read. Go beyond actual text and be able to try and interpret what the author is trying to project. In the end, see the overall picture, underlying themes.”

Open-ended Question #3: Do you implement reading comprehension instruction? If so, describe examples of how you provide this type of instruction.

Teacher 3 commented on the steps she takes to implement reading comprehension instruction. “With the kind of students I have, we read one paragraph at a time, look at the main idea, identify new vocabulary, elaborate on vocabulary if they don’t know it, reinforce vocabulary with a visual picture so they can see what it is, and use the word itself.”

Open-ended Question #4: What are some of the reading comprehension strategies you teach in your reading class?

Teacher 3 was brief when answering this question. “Identify vocabulary first; we look at the title or subtitle to see what it’s about, and we look for the main idea.”

Open-ended Question #5: Describe the process you use to teach students reading strategies to facilitate their understanding of what they read.

Teacher 3 was also brief in her answer to this question. “We circle the title or subtitles, number the paragraphs, identify new vocabulary or any word, underline main idea.”

#### **Teacher 4**

Teacher 4 appeared to be very straight-forward yet self-assured of his answers to the interview questions. He has a bachelor’s degree in history and was on a probationary certificate in social studies, 4-8, at the time of this interview. He was in his second year of

teaching at one of the middle schools chosen for this study. Teacher 3 had taught World history and Texas history during his two years of teaching experience. He indicated he had received training on reading comprehension through Region One Workshops, district-based staff development, campus-based staff development, and department/faculty meetings. He noted that Region One Workshops had influenced his teaching career the most. During the three observations, Teacher 4 spent 4 minutes on comprehension practices and 9 minutes on vocabulary practices. This accounted for 3% of the comprehension and 7% of the vocabulary procedures that were observed. The sole comprehension strategy that Teacher 4 spent time, 4 minutes, was asking students to justify or elaborate their responses, while he spent 9 minutes on the vocabulary strategy of providing an explanation, a definition, or an example. Teacher 4 did not appear to have knowledge of comprehension instruction, as he described comprehension instruction to mean, “read along with them, encourage them [students],” and also said he implemented comprehension instruction by reading along with his students in class.

Open-ended Question #1: What are some qualities you think a good reader should have?

Teacher 4 commented that “a good reader understands text.” He added that good readers also have language understanding, “A good reader speaks the language in the text, is able to read in school settings and read in front of peers.”

Open-ended Question #2: In your own words, describe what reading comprehension instruction entails.

Teacher 4 noted that comprehension instruction entails “reading along with them [students].” As a SS teacher, he expressed importance in encouraging students as an essential practice of comprehension instruction. He also said, “Having peer interaction with



students to help each other,” for the terminology found in the text books and that is unknown to students.

Open-ended Question #3: Do you implement reading comprehension instruction? If so, describe examples of how you provide this type of instruction.

Teacher 4 said he reads along with his students as part of implementing comprehension instruction. “In class, I read along with them, mostly to encourage them to read because they have trouble with language and vocabulary in the book.”

Open-ended Question #4: What are some of the reading comprehension strategies you teach in your social studies class?

Teacher 4 emphasized vocabulary in his answer to this question. “We read individually, find words they don’t understand, and as a class go over them so they can understand them – words can be text words or every day words.”

Open-ended Question #5: Describe the process you use to teach students reading strategies to facilitate their understanding of what they read.

In response to this question, Teacher 4 highlighted note-taking as an important component of the process to teach reading strategies. “After reading, we take notes of what we’ve read. The notes come straight from the students.” By this statement, the teacher said he lets the students take ownership of note taking, therefore, the notes are solely written by the students and then reviewed for understanding. “We review those notes for students to understand.”

## **Teacher 5**

Teacher 5 appeared calm throughout the interview, and gave some thought to his answers before replying to the questions. He holds a bachelor’s degree with a major in political science. He is certified as a Generalist, 4-8, and was on his fourth year of teaching at the

time of this interview. Since he began his teaching career, he has taught English Language Arts. He began his teaching career at the same middle school in which he was employed at the time of this interview. Teacher 5 received training on reading comprehension through Region One Workshops, district-based staff development, campus-based staff development, department/faculty meetings, and college/university courses. He said the training that has influenced his teaching the most was the interaction with other experienced teachers who guided and helped him improve his teaching. Teacher 5 spent 34 minutes on comprehension practices, 26% of the total time observed. He did not spend any time on vocabulary procedures. He spent 13 minutes on activating prior knowledge; about 1 minute on asking students to justify or elaborate their responses, and 20 minutes on asking questions based on text material that required making inferences, summarizing/finding main ideas, drawing conclusions, or some other complex skill. Teacher 5 is the second teacher who spent the most time, 34 minutes of the total 130 minutes observed, on comprehension practices. He has attended at least one training on reading comprehension at five different entities and seemed to have some knowledge about comprehension instruction as he alluded to defining it by stating, “working with students to help them understand what’s being read.” He seemed to confuse the meanings of comprehension and comprehension instruction as he stated that he implemented comprehension instruction by questioning students to see if they understand what is being read. Although questioning is associated with comprehension instruction, in this case, the teacher did not mention using questioning to further students’ comprehension abilities, but rather used questioning as a form of assessment.

Open-ended Question #1: What are some qualities you think a good reader should have?

Teacher 5 replied confidently that a good reader should have “comprehension, and be able

to predict, make inferences, make connections.” He added that fluency was an important quality of a good reader.

Open-ended Question #2: In your own words, describe what reading comprehension instruction entails.

Teacher 5 mentioned that comprehension instruction included some type of understanding, and said comprehension instruction is “able to work with students to help them understand what’s being read, why things are happening, analyzing at a higher level.”

Open-ended Question #3: Do you implement reading comprehension instruction? If so, describe examples of how you provide this type of instruction.

Teacher 5 remarked he implemented reading comprehension instruction “by questioning students to see if they understand what is being read. I have students come up with questions that they do or don’t understand. I have students analyze story with plot map to identify climax, resolution, problem, solution.” Although this participant was observed using a Thinking Map for a compare/contrast activity, the researcher did not observe the participant using a plot map to analyze a story.

Open-ended Question #4: What are some of the reading comprehension strategies you teach in your reading/social studies class?

Some of the reading comprehension strategies that Teacher 5 said he teaches include, “Marginal notes, KWL chart, and thinking maps.” He added that he has his students write out what they have read to see it in different ways.”

Open-ended Question #5: Describe the process you use to teach students reading strategies to facilitate their understanding of what they read.

Teacher 5 commented on modeling “I do, we do you do – guided instruction,” as part

of the process of teaching reading strategies. He also mentioned “peer work, independent work – for students to understand the process.”

### **Teacher 6**

Teacher 6 was very brief with her answers to the interview questions, yet replied in a courteous, witty manner. She holds a bachelor’s degree in Radio-TV-Film. She is certified in Secondary English, 6-12; Secondary Sociology, 6-12, and English as a Second Language, 6-12. She has taught Reading, Writing, and English Language Arts in the 21 years of her teaching experience at the same middle school where she was employed at the time of this interview. Teacher 6 did not have any training on reading comprehension strategies.

Teacher 6 did not implement any comprehension or vocabulary practices. Teacher 6 did not attend any training on reading comprehension, therefore, she did not seem to have any knowledge of comprehension instruction. She did, however, appear to know that vocabulary is important for comprehension as she stated that students need to understand vocabulary in order to comprehend.

Open-ended Question #1: What are some qualities you think a good reader should have?

Some of the qualities that Teacher 6 said a good reader should have include recalling information, analyzing, and making connections. “A good reader is able to connect to her memory or around her. A good reader should create mental pictures.”

Open-ended Question #2: In your own words, describe what reading comprehension instruction entails.

Teacher 6 referenced that comprehension instruction consisted of understanding and stated that comprehension instruction is “getting students to be able to understand information. Once they can decode, they need to know how to connect and visualize.” She

also added that “they [students] need to understand vocabulary in order to comprehend.”

Open-ended Question #3: Do you implement reading comprehension instruction? If so, describe examples of how you provide this type of instruction.

Teacher 6 was very brief about implementing comprehension instruction, “I provide vocabulary instruction, journal activities, summarizing paragraphs, readings.”

Open-ended Question #4: What are some of the reading comprehension strategies you teach in your reading/social studies class?

Teacher 6 indicated the reading strategies used in her classroom were “journal writing, summarizing, breaking down information.”

Open-ended Question #5: Describe the process you use to teach students reading strategies to facilitate their understanding of what they read.

Teacher 6 commented, “Teach them to connect, journal writing, summarizing, vocabulary through pictures. It carries over to other classes once they learn it.”

### **Teacher 7**

Teacher 7 was pleasant and good-natured in character; her answers came in a calm, serene manner. She holds a bachelor’s degree in Psychology with a minor in Sociology. She is certified as a generalist, 4-8, and English as a Second Language, 4-8. She has taught English Language Arts and social studies classes. She was in her fifth year of teaching at the same middle school where she began her teaching career at the time of this interview. Teacher 7 had received training on reading comprehension strategies from Region One Workshops, district-based staff development, campus-based staff development, department/faculty meetings, and college/university courses. She said the training that had influenced his teaching the most was from Region One Workshops. During three observations, Teacher 7

spent 8 minutes on comprehension practices, which accounted for 6% of the total time observed, and no time on vocabulary practices. She spent about 7 minutes on activating prior knowledge, and about 1 minute on asking questions based on text material that required making inferences, summarizing/finding main ideas drawing conclusions, or some other complex skill. Teacher 7 has attended at least one training on reading comprehension at five different entities, however, she did not seem to reflect much knowledge about comprehension instruction. She described comprehension instruction as “walking students through the thinking process,” and stated that she implemented comprehension instruction by retelling a story in Spanish for students to understand text.

Open-ended Question #1: What are some qualities you think a good reader should have?

In his reply, Teacher 7 mentioned “comprehension, fluency, which are the most important ones, and vocabulary” as some of the qualities a good reader should have.

Open-ended Question #2: In your own words, describe what reading comprehension instruction entails.

Teacher 7 said comprehension instruction is “walking students through thinking process. Students are not used to using critical thinking skills.” However, the researcher did not observe Teacher 7 model the thinking process for the students during any of the three observation times.

Open-ended Question #3: Do you implement reading comprehension instruction? If so, describe examples of how you provide this type of instruction.

Teacher 7 mentioned, “I offer students selections that have visual cues, visual accommodations. I retell a story in Spanish so they [students] can understand and answer questions correctly.”

Open-ended Question #4: What are some of the reading comprehension strategies you teach in your reading/social studies class?

As part of his answer, Teacher 7 included summarizing as a strategy used in his classroom, but also mentioned working with vocabulary as a strategy, and discussed the strategies used: “Summarize every couple of paragraphs, [take] marginal notes, underline difficult vocabulary words, look at pictures and descriptions for hints, identify purpose of selection, and look at title for hints.”

Open-ended Question #5: Describe the process you use to teach students reading strategies to facilitate their understanding of what they read.

For this question, Teacher 7 was very brief, and said, “A lot of repetition, being very consistent, context clues for all contents.”

### **Teacher 8**

Teacher 8 had a very friendly character but was rather timid when answering the interview questions. He holds a bachelor’s degree in Agriculture, Poultry Science, and is certified as a generalist, 4-8. He had taught Texas history and social studies in the two years of his teaching experience at the same middle school at the time of this interview. The only training Teacher 8 had received on reading comprehension strategies was from Region One Workshops. He believes the most influential training on his teaching was Region One training. Teacher 8 did not spend any time on comprehension or vocabulary practices. Teacher 8 has participated in at least one training of reading comprehension at a Region Education Service Center. It didn’t appear that Teacher 8 was knowledgeable about comprehension instruction, as he seemed to confuse comprehension instruction with comprehension by mentioning that comprehension instruction involved using context clues

but failed to mention the explicit instruction by the teacher.

Open-ended Question #1: What are some qualities you think a good reader should have?

While Teacher 8 stressed comprehension and fluency as two qualities that a good reader should have, he also stated that vocabulary was a quality of a good reader. He remarked that good readers should have, “understanding of vocabulary. They should grasp what s/he is reading; nowadays they don’t understand what they read.”

Open-ended Question #2: In your own words, describe what reading comprehension instruction entails.

Teacher 8 indicated that comprehension instruction included some type of understanding and said comprehension instruction was “being able to understand, using words that they [students] just read, using context clues, understand what they read. They should be able to understand part of what they have read in any content area.”

Open-ended Question #3: Do you implement reading comprehension instruction? If so, describe examples of how you provide this type of instruction.

Teacher 8 emphasized questioning as part of implementing reading comprehension instruction. He indicated, “I do group reading, paired reading. I go back and ask questions.” He added, “If I ask broad questions, they won’t know. If I ask specific questions, I break it down, and specifically ask, for example: ‘Where is Laredo?’ That’s how they grasp. They don’t get it from just reading.”

Open-ended Question #4: What are some of the reading comprehension strategies you teach in your reading/social studies class?

Teacher 8 made reference to summarizing as a strategy used in his classroom, and also mentioned TNT reading strategies, “I don’t cover a whole lot of reading strategies. We do



TNT strategies for 45 minutes (Reading). When covering social studies, the group reads, they do paired reading, silent reading, and summarize what they just read.”

Open-ended Question #5: Describe the process you use to teach students reading strategies to facilitate their understanding of what they read.

As part of his process for teaching reading strategies, Teacher 8 allows each student to read. “Students have control of the reading. In order so I am not forcing them, they choose who’s going to read next. If they’re not compliant, the other students motivate the reluctant readers to read. If it’s a weak reader, they will read a few sentences. That way they don’t feel bad about themselves, and they feel good they participated, and were not put down.”

### **Teacher 9**

Teacher 9 was nervous and somewhat worried about her answers to the interview questions. She holds a bachelor’s degree with a major in History and a minor in Psychology. She was in her third year of teaching at the same middle where she began her teaching career at the time of this interview. She is certified in Social Studies, 4-8, and has taught Texas history. She received training on reading comprehension strategies through district-based staff development, campus-based staff development, department/faculty meetings, and college/university courses. She said a GT (Gifted & Talented) training at the university had influenced her teaching the most. Teacher 9 spent 28 minutes on vocabulary procedures, which accounted for 21% of the total time observed. She did not spend any time on comprehension procedures. She spent about 1 minute on providing an explanation, a definition, or an example, and approximately 27 minutes on having students do something that requires knowledge of words. Teacher 9 is the second teacher who spent the most time, 28 minutes of the 135 minutes observed, on vocabulary practices. She has attended at least

one training on reading comprehension at four different entities, but was not able to define comprehension instruction. Rather, she mentioned that vocabulary was important for comprehension, and also said she used questioning to check for understanding, but did not refer to any type of teacher modeling for students to understand text.

Open-ended Question #1: What are some qualities you think a good reader should have?

Teacher 9 noted that a good reader should have “a good understanding of language they are reading so they can get full comprehension.” She also mentioned a strong vocabulary foundation to be a quality of a good reader.

Open-ended Question #2: In your own words, describe what reading comprehension instruction entails.

Teacher 9 said that comprehension instruction consisted of vocabulary instruction, and mentioned that comprehension instruction entails “trying to develop a strong vocabulary base. Once they [students] get vocabulary, they will understand what they are reading.”

Open-ended Question #3: Do you implement reading comprehension instruction? If so, describe examples of how you provide this type of instruction.

Teacher 9 commented, “I do questioning. After we read a few sentences, I stop and check to see if they understand what they are reading. With silent reading, I stop every few minutes to check for understanding. I pick on kids who never answer or are too shy.”

Open-ended Question #4: What are some of the reading comprehension strategies you teach in your reading/social studies class?

Teacher 9 made some reference to identifying the main idea as a strategy. She also mentioned the following strategies used in her classroom: “question/answer sessions, read paragraphs and question them; underline topic, main idea; read questions to them and they go

back to paragraph; they reread to find answer without my help.”

Open-ended Question #5: Describe the process you use to teach students reading strategies to facilitate their understanding of what they read.

Teacher 9 remarked, “Hands on activities, lots of foldables – these help a lot with comprehension and helps them find main idea of passages or unit.”

### **Teacher 10**

Teacher 10 expressed a heartwarming welcome as I entered her classroom for the interview. She displayed a beaming smile and a jolly personality throughout the interview. Teacher 10 holds a bachelor’s degree with majors in History and Spanish. She is certified in History and Spanish, and has taught history during all her 30 years of teaching. She did not specify if she had been at the same middle school all 30 years. She has received training on reading comprehension strategies through Region One Workshops, district-based staff development, campus-based staff development, and department/faculty meetings. The most influential trainings for Teacher 10 have been an Advanced Placement (AP) training on writing, and a Region One training on reading. Teacher 10 did not spend any time on comprehension or vocabulary practices. Teacher 10 has attended at least one training on reading comprehension at four different entities, but did not seem to have knowledge about comprehension instruction. She described comprehension instruction as a way for students to be able to “take what’s important out of what they’ve read.” Teacher 10 also confused questioning to mean comprehension instruction rather than questioning being a component to check for comprehension.

Open-ended Question #1: What are some qualities you think a good reader should have?

Teacher 10 believes that phonics is an important quality of a good reader, and added that

in order to become a good reader, it starts at a young age. She also mentioned other qualities of a good reader, “Interest, passion, desire to learn. Language has to be acquired by mouthing out; it’s lacking, kids don’t have it.”

Open-ended Question #2: In your own words, describe what reading comprehension instruction entails.

Teacher 10 indicated that comprehension instruction involved understanding, and said comprehension instruction is “understanding the content, what you’re supposed to take from content and context. Kids don’t know how to separate important from trivial. We need to show them. Good readers don’t get the gist, they take what’s important out of what they’ve read.”

Open-ended Question #3: Do you implement reading comprehension instruction? If so, describe examples of how you provide this type of instruction.

Besides saying that questioning was part of implementing comprehension instruction, Teacher 10 also said that identifying the main idea was also part of implementing comprehension instruction, and stated, “I implement reading comprehension instruction when I have kids read. I ask them [students] what was important, and we decipher what was just read. We highlight the main idea and what’s relevant.”

Open-ended Question #4: What are some of the reading comprehension strategies you teach in your social studies class?

Teacher 10 said the strategies she used were “look at context – look at what was written, look at clues.” She mentioned that the lack of vocabulary knowledge contributes to students’ deficiency in reading comprehension. “Kids don’t have vocabulary, a lot don’t have the skills.”

Open-ended Question #5: Describe the process you use to teach students reading strategies to facilitate their understanding of what they read.

As Teacher 10 described the procedure she uses to teach reading strategies, she mentioned that she focuses on the lesson's concept during the process. She stated she used "Vocabulary windows and take concept – what is it that is being taught; for example, revolutions are not all the same. I ask my students, 'Tell me the difference (of the different revolutions); give me examples [of the different revolutions].' I also use word walls to concentrate on concepts."

### **Teacher 11**

Teacher 11 exhibited a cautious, yet friendly, attitude toward answering the interview questions. She has a bachelor's degree with majors in Journalism and History, and minors in Foreign Languages and Spanish Literature. She is certified to teach secondary history, and has taught history and social studies in her 17 years of teaching. She did not specify if she had been at the same middle school all 17 years. Teacher 11 has received training on reading comprehension through Region One Workshops, district-based staff development, campus-based staff development, and department/faculty meetings. She stated that the training that has influenced her teaching the most was a training on S.I.O.P. (Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol), but did not specify the entity that provided the training. SIOP is geared toward implementing strategies to assist English Language Learners. During the three observations, Teacher 11 spent 12 minutes on comprehension practices, and no time on vocabulary practices. The sole comprehension strategy she spent time was activating prior knowledge, which accounted for 10% of the total time observed. Teacher 11 has participated in at least one training on reading comprehension at four different entities, but did not seem

to have knowledge on comprehension instruction. She stated that comprehension instruction meant questioning students, and that she implemented comprehension instruction by asking different levels of questions; however, she did not mention any type of explicit instruction provided by the teacher for students to comprehend.

Open-ended Question #1: What are some qualities you think a good reader should have?

In response to this question, Teacher 11 stated that a good reader should be able to set a purpose for reading and have fluency. “They should read fluently, not necessarily fast but clearly so the reader [him/herself] can understand what they are reading.”

Open-ended Question #2: In your own words, describe what reading comprehension instruction entails.

Teacher 11 noted that comprehension instruction was a “breakdown of reading skills. Begin with lower level questions, understanding basic information then moving onto higher level questions, keeping in mind strategies, stopping, questioning, answering before moving on.”

Open-ended Question #3: Do you implement reading comprehension instruction? If so, describe examples of how you provide this type of instruction.

Teacher 11 noted that reading comprehension was “extremely important to understand.” She continued to explain how she implements reading comprehension instruction, “Setting a purpose and building background. We interact with the text with different levels of questions. I always make sure I start with lower level and build on those.”

Open-ended Question #4: What are some of the reading comprehension strategies you teach in your social studies class?

Teacher 11 began by making some reference to identifying the main idea as a strategy.

“Finding the main idea – breaking it down; at the beginning [of reading], build background, activate prior knowledge.” She continued by saying, “Make predictions with anticipatory guide. During reading, constant stopping for questioning, discussing. I assign a question to a pair of students; then they discuss questions and answers. I have students learn how to question themselves.”

Open-ended Question #5: Describe the process you use to teach students reading strategies to facilitate their understanding of what they read.

Teacher 11 noted that the process of teaching students reading strategies “has to be done in steps. Many times, when students don’t understand vocabulary, it impedes understanding. We need to look at words in their native language, or word families to have a little bit of comprehension.”

#### **Teacher 12**

Teacher 12 was very willing and cooperative as she answered the interview questions. She radiated a cheerful attitude and welcomed my presence throughout the interview. Teacher 12 holds bachelor and master degrees in American History and a minor in Spanish. She is certified Elementary self-contained and Secondary History, and has taught Texas history during her 28 years of teaching. It was her first year at the middle school where she was presently employed at the time of this interview. She has attended training on reading comprehension strategies through Region 20 Workshops, district-based staff development, and campus-based staff development. She stated that the trainings that had influenced her teaching the most were Region 20 Workshops and district-based staff development. Teacher 12 spent only 1 minute on vocabulary practices, and no time on comprehension practices, during the three times she was observed. She spent about half a minute on providing an

explanation, a definition, or an example, and about half a minute on elaborating or extending a definition, which accounted for 1% of the total time observed. Teacher 12 has attended at least one training on reading comprehension at three different entities, but did not appear to know the meaning of comprehension instruction. Instead, she stressed that comprehension instruction entailed the instruction of vocabulary.

Open-ended Question #1: What are some qualities you think a good reader should have?

Teacher 12 made some mention of vocabulary as being a good quality of a reader. “They should be able to clearly pronounce words. They should also understand meaning of context and follow the meaning.”

Open-ended Question #2: In your own words, describe what reading comprehension instruction entails.

Teacher 12 said comprehension instruction meant “outlining in history. Read paragraph by paragraph and take words that they [students] don’t understand and substitute words.” She added that it also involved, “Creating our own dictionaries, with two or three meanings for words they are not understanding. They [students] are told to break up words and take them apart to understand words.”

Open-ended Question #3: Do you implement reading comprehension instruction? If so, describe examples of how you provide this type of instruction.

Teacher 12 mentioned that group reading was part of implementing comprehension instruction, and remarked, “I put kids in groups of six and give them a section to read and discuss it. Then they come up with an outline and present their outline to the rest of the class.”

Open-ended Question #4: What are some of the reading comprehension strategies you teach



in your reading/social studies class?

Teacher 12 made mention of working with vocabulary as a strategy. She also made some reference to identifying the main idea as a strategy utilized in her classroom and cited working with context clues as a reading strategy. Additionally, Teacher 12 reported that the reading strategies taught in her classroom included, “Looking at root of words, context clues, main idea; like teaching a story but it’s real and not like ‘Once upon a time,’ because it’s history.”

Open-ended Question #5: Describe the process you use to teach students reading strategies to facilitate their understanding of what they read.

Teacher 12 commented, “I use notes because it keeps them organized and they can see the progression. If I’m teaching vocabulary, they can color, highlight, box, circle it [vocabulary word], and put it out there to discuss it.” She added that she created an activity called “Test Question – I came up with this,” and the main purpose of the activity according to Teacher 12 is “so students will know it could be a test question.” She also uses “study guides which consist of bare bone facts. We discuss the subject and mentally go back and forth to make connections.”

### **Review of Participants’ Responses**

After reviewing the participants’ responses for Question #1, the researcher noted that the participants seemed to place a great deal of emphasis on comprehension as being a strong quality of a good reader. Three other behaviors that participants felt were qualities of a good reader included fluent reading, vocabulary knowledge, and language understanding. The responses from the five teachers who implemented comprehension instructional practices during the observations, 1, 4, 5, 7, and 11, did not differ significantly from the rest of the

participants who did not implement any comprehension practices during the observation periods.

The review of the participants' responses also revealed there were two teachers who were very specific in their responses, and who appeared to be more knowledgeable than the other participants when describing the qualities of a good reader. From these two teacher participants, only one of them, Teacher 1, implemented 21 minutes of comprehension strategies during the observations. This accounted for 1% of the total observation time (1,561 minutes), and 27% of the total 79 minutes observation time of comprehension strategies. The other teacher did not implement comprehension strategies during the observations.

A careful analysis of the participants' responses to Question #2 revealed that most of the respondents did not address the concept of reading comprehension instruction. The majority of the responses clustered around reading comprehension-related instructional behaviors. Only one provided a response that suggested the implementation of reading comprehension instruction in the classroom. This is illustrated by the following comment: "Be specific with each student; there's not one strategy that will help all students to comprehend. Monitor their progress, growth. Modeling – how does the teacher understand so she can pass it on to students?" This participant implemented comprehension practices, such as the teacher asking questions that required students to draw conclusions, and the teacher activating the students' prior knowledge by questioning students on text components, for 21 minutes during the observations. However, this participant did not implement comprehension instruction during any of the classroom observations, i.e., the participant did not teach or model any strategies for the students to be able to understand text. One other participant devoted more time to

comprehension practices, 34 minutes, but did not implement comprehension instruction during any of the observations. The comprehension practices included the teacher activating the students' prior knowledge, the teacher asking questions for students to make inferences and draw conclusions, and the teacher asking students to justify or elaborate their responses. The results from the observations show that teachers spent 79 minutes on comprehension practices, and no time on comprehension instruction. Five teachers, 1, 4, 5, 7, and 11, were the only ones who spent time on comprehension practices: Teacher 1 – 21 minutes; Teacher 4 – 4 minutes; Teacher 5 – 34 minutes; Teacher 7 – 8 minutes, and Teacher 11 – 12 minutes.

A thorough review of the participants' responses to Question #3 indicated that only one respondent seemed to address the question correctly by mentioning that modeling was a way of providing comprehension instruction in the classroom. Although this respondent mentioned modeling as being part of comprehension instruction, the researcher did not observe any modeling by the participant during the observations. Six out of the 12 participants, 2, 5, 8, 9, 10 and 11, viewed teacher questioning as a way of providing comprehension instruction in their classrooms. Even though questioning is considered to be closely associated with comprehension instruction, unless the teacher does something with the questions to advance the students' comprehension abilities, questioning, in these cases, would be considered "Comprehension: Assessment," (Durkin, 1978), whereby the teacher solely checks for the students' correct or incorrect answers. None of these participants, 2, 5, 8, 9, 10, and 11, taught comprehension instruction during the observations.

The most popular strategies the teachers mentioned for Question #4 were working with vocabulary, summarizing, identifying the main idea, and using context clues, as indicated each by four participants. None of these participants, 3, 9, 11 and 12, taught their students

how to identify/find the main idea during any of the observations. Two teachers, 9 and 11, noted teacher questioning as a reading strategy used in their classrooms, while Participants 1, 5 and 7, mentioned marginal notes to be a reading strategy they used in their classrooms. During a classroom observation, Teacher 8 read aloud from the social studies textbook, called on individual students to read aloud from the social studies textbook, and paused to summarize the readings for the students. Teachers 2, 6, 7 and 8, who mentioned summarization as a strategy taught in their classroom, did not teach their students how to summarize during any of the observations.

Although teachers mentioned a variety of strategies they said they taught in their classrooms, a careful examination of the data revealed that teachers did not teach any reading comprehension strategies during the classroom observations. About half of the teacher participants did some type of reviewing activity with their students. Four teachers used TNT strategies during the classroom observations. Other activities observed involved two teachers, one ELA/R and one SS, presenting power points; the ELA/R teacher presented two power points during two of the observations, each lasting about 20 minutes, while the SS teacher presented one power point during one of the observations, lasting about 40 minutes. Additionally, two SS teachers used CNN to show students current events; both SS teachers turned on the TV and let the students view and listen to the current event news on CNN. Other activities observed included one SS teacher working on grade averages, and seven teachers – four ELA/R and three SS – working on preparing students for the state exam using practice handouts, curriculum benchmark assessments (CBAs) or state released exams.

After reviewing the participants' answers to Question #5, the responses revealed that several participants, 3, 6, 10, 11 and 12, made some mention of vocabulary as being part of

their process to teach their students reading strategies. However, it appears from the participants' responses that they did not describe a process for teaching reading strategies, but rather named individual strategies they use in their classrooms. It seems Teacher 5 made a vague attempt at describing a process by briefly referring to "I do, we do, you do – guided instruction," and rather than explain the process, drifted to mention peer work and independent work as part of the process to teach reading strategies. The "I do, we do, you do" refers to the teacher modeling to the students, followed by the teacher and students practicing the strategy together, and lastly the students practice the strategy on their own. During the three observations of this teacher, the researcher did not observe the mentioned guided instruction process.

### **Summary of Participants' Responses**

Based on the participants' responses to the interview questions, which dealt with comprehension instruction, it seems that the participants' answers are related to their practices in the classroom. Their responses seem to reflect their lack of knowledge of comprehension instruction and what it looks like in the classroom, which could be a result of insufficient professional development targeting comprehension and comprehension instruction. Although the participants believed they understood the meaning of comprehension instruction, their replies suggested a misunderstanding, or a disconnect, of the terms *comprehension* and *comprehension instruction*. Eleven of the participants did not understand the meaning of comprehension instruction, based on their replies to the question asking them to describe comprehension instruction. Instead, half of the participants' replies indicated a meaning for comprehension not comprehension instruction. Some of the ways reflecting the teachers' inaccuracies about comprehension and comprehension instruction

included replies such as “paraphrase, picture what they read, work with students to help them understand, walking students through thinking process,” suggesting a theme of some of the components found in teaching comprehension. The observations reveal that very little, or approximately 5%, 79 minutes, of the total time observed (1,561 minutes), was spent on comprehension practices by all participants, which included ELA/R and SS teachers.

However, only five teachers out of the 12 participants, three beginner ELA/R, one beginner SS, and one seasoned SS, implemented comprehension procedures. Out of these five teachers who implemented comprehension practices, only two teachers, one beginner ELA/R and one beginner SS, spent time on vocabulary practices. Only one of two teachers, who spent the most time on comprehension procedures, 55 minutes between both teachers of the total 79 total minutes, spent 34 minutes on comprehension practices.

Out of the five teachers who implemented comprehension practices during the observed times, only two teachers, the two who spent the most time on comprehension practices, seemed to have some knowledge about comprehension instruction. One teacher, who spent 21 minutes on comprehension procedures, was the only teacher, out of the 12 participants, who seemed to have any knowledge of comprehension instruction by stating that it involved modeling to the students in order for them to understand text. The other teacher, who spent 34 minutes on comprehension practices, appeared to have some knowledge of comprehension instruction as he mentioned that it involves the teacher working with students to help them understand text. Out of the six teachers who implemented vocabulary practices during the observations, four of these teachers mentioned vocabulary to be critical for comprehension, but were not able to define comprehension instruction. Five teachers stated that the professional development that influenced them the most was provided by the Region

Education Service Center; out of these five teachers, two teachers implemented comprehension practices and two teachers implemented vocabulary practices, during the observed times. None of these teachers seemed to reflect any knowledge of comprehension instruction as their responses to describing comprehension instruction varied from having students work together to working with vocabulary as being essential for comprehension.

The responses from the interview questions also seem to reflect the participants' teaching practices of how they believe they are implementing comprehension instruction in their classrooms. The small number of teachers who mentioned some of the comprehension instructional activities listed on the instrument is indicative of the minimal amount of time spent on comprehension practices. Additionally, the participants' answers to the open-ended questions complement the researcher's observations regarding comprehension instruction in the 12 classrooms: the participants did not seem to be able to articulate effectively a definition of comprehension instruction; they did not seem to have adequate knowledge of comprehension instruction, and they did not seem to devote a significant amount of time to comprehension instruction in their classrooms.

### **Questionnaire**

Participants were also given a questionnaire (Appendix C), which included an open-ended question, that asked them to name the kind of reading comprehension training that had influenced their teaching the most. The responses were used to determine participants' perceptions of the professional development training they had received on reading comprehension strategies. Table 12 summarizes the participants' responses.

Table 12

*Participants' Perceptions Concerning Reading Comprehension Professional Development*

Training	Number of Participants indicating most influential
Region One Education Service Center	5
College/University Courses	2
Faculty/Dept., GT, District trainings	2
SIOP trainings	2
AP training	1
Total	12

Forty-two percent of the teachers indicated that they received training from the Region One Education Service Center, the largest contributor to teachers' training. The remaining sources of the teachers' training were divided among college/university courses, faculty/department/district initiatives, Gifted and Talented seminars; SIOP (Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol) and Advanced Placement sessions. Some participants mentioned other kinds of staff development that was most influential to them. These included: Write for the Future, Teaching Reading in Social Studies, classroom experience, and interaction with other experienced teachers.

In sum, the participants' responses to the interview questions and questionnaire revealed that participating teachers reflected a limited understanding and implementation of reading comprehension instructional practices. Beginning with the first question which asked participants to name the qualities of a good reader, the responses focused on reading process components geared toward teaching students to learn how to read. With the exception of one



participant, all other participants did not demonstrate an understanding of reading comprehension instruction. Instead, they mentioned comprehension-related or non-comprehension related instructional practices, such as questioning, looking for main idea, vocabulary instruction, journal activities, summarizing, visual cues, checking for understanding, outlining, setting a purpose, building background, reading along with students, retelling text reading in Spanish, group reading. The sole participant who seemed to demonstrate an understanding of reading comprehension instruction, teaching students how to make meaning of what they read, is a beginner teacher who implemented comprehension practices, behaviors associated with comprehension but do not explicitly show students how to construct meaning of text, for a total of 21 minutes during the three observations; however, no comprehension instruction was observed during any of the observations. This accounted for 16% of the approximate 135 minutes of observation time for this teacher. Even though only one participant seemed to have any understanding of comprehension instruction, four other participants, who did not indicate knowledge of comprehension instruction, implemented comprehension practices in their classrooms during the observations. The participants included two ELA/R teachers, also beginner teachers, who implemented comprehension practices for 34 minutes, or 25% of the total observed time, and eight minutes, or 6% of the total observed time, respectively; the total observation time for both teachers was also approximately 135 minutes each. Only two of the six SS teachers implemented comprehension activities in their classrooms; one was a seasoned teacher and one was a beginner teacher. The seasoned SS teacher implemented comprehension activities for 12 minutes, or 9%, and the beginner teacher implemented comprehension practices for five minutes, or 4%, of the approximate 135 minutes observation time for each.

When asked about the implementation of reading comprehension strategies in their classrooms, only four teachers mentioned summarizing, a reading strategy that improves comprehension (Duke & Pearson, 2002; Vacca & Vacca, 2005; Ness, 2007). Approximately five teachers did not seem to be aware of reading comprehension strategies, such as predicting, questioning, or rereading, and instead mentioned writing a journal, TNT, identify vocabulary, identify a title or subtitle. They did not mention many of the strategies that research has shown to improve comprehension: students having clear goals in mind for their reading; students looking over the text before they read it to make predictions about the text; students reading selectively to make decisions about their reading; students determining the meaning of unfamiliar words and concepts; students integrating their prior knowledge into the text; students monitoring their understanding of the text; students thinking about the text before, during, and after reading (Duke & Pearson, 2002; Vacca & Vacca, 2005); predicting, questioning, summarizing (Ness, 2007). Rather, their responses reflected the qualities of good readers and reading objectives that are assessed on the state achievement test. Out of the five teachers who implemented comprehension practices, four of them were beginners, which suggests that seasoned teachers may not be aware of scientifically based reading research on how to teach comprehension to students; it could be that professional development for preparing teachers to teach comprehension instruction has not helped them improve their students' comprehension. For the purpose of this study, seasoned teachers were identified as having 15 years or more teaching experience, and beginner teachers were identified as having 3 years or less teaching experience.

### **Summary of Quantitative and Qualitative Analyses**

The research questions that led this study indicate that the participants spent

approximately 79 minutes on comprehension activities and about 121 minutes on vocabulary practices. The ELA/R teachers spent 63 minutes on comprehension activities and 83 minutes on vocabulary practices. The SS teachers spent 16 minutes on comprehension practices and 38 minutes on vocabulary activities. The beginner teachers spent 67 minutes on comprehension practices; the beginner ELA/R spent 63 minutes while the beginner SS teachers spent four minutes on these practices. The seasoned SS teachers spent 12 minutes on comprehension practices; the seasoned ELA/R teachers did not spend any time on comprehension activities. The beginner teachers spent 43 minutes on vocabulary practices; the beginner ELA/R teachers spent seven minutes while the beginner SS teachers spent 36 minutes on these activities. The seasoned teachers spent 78 minutes on vocabulary activities; the seasoned ELA/R teachers spent 76 minutes while the seasoned SS teachers only spent two minutes on vocabulary practices. The researcher also attempted to find out if ELA/R and SS teachers differed significantly in the frequency with which they implement reading comprehension and vocabulary strategies by using Chi square analyses, however Chi square analyses could not be computed due to the limited number of observed frequencies of teachers implementing comprehension or vocabulary practices.

To summarize the qualitative portion of this study, it appears from the teachers' responses to the open-ended questions that a great emphasis was placed on comprehension as a quality of a strong reader. Additionally, 11 out of the 12 teacher participants were not able to address what comprehension instruction entails, but rather mentioned comprehension-related instructional behaviors, such as *Comprehension: Assessment* and *Comprehension: Preparation*. Only one teacher provided a response that included modeling as a way of providing comprehension instruction in the classroom; half of the teacher participants

mentioned teacher-questioning as a means to providing comprehension instruction in their classrooms. Some of the most common reading comprehension strategies that teachers mentioned included working with vocabulary, identifying the main idea, and using context clues. The majority of the teachers mentioned vocabulary as part of the process to teach reading strategies; they were not able to describe a process they used to teach reading strategies and instead named individual strategies they used in their classrooms.

It appears from the observations and interviews that the teacher participants need to be taught how to teach comprehension and vocabulary instruction in order to facilitate students' comprehension of texts. None of the teacher participants taught any comprehension or vocabulary instruction during any of the 36 observations, 1,561 minutes. Research indicates that not much has changed in the area of improving students' comprehension of texts over the past 37 years (Spor & Schneider, 1999; Pressley, 2000; Biancarosa & Snow, 2006). Future research could focus on teachers' preparedness of teaching comprehension instruction, not only in the reading classes but in other content areas. The focus could target professional development training provided to content area teachers before, during, and after the school year. Research indicates that on-going professional development helps improve teaching and can lead to higher student achievement (The National Reading Panel, 2000; Penuel, Fishman, Yamaguchi & Gallagher, 2007).

## **CHAPTER V**

### **SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

This chapter summarizes the findings of the study regarding the implementation of reading comprehension and vocabulary instructional activities in ELA/R and SS classes, and the frequencies with which ELA/R and SS teachers use comprehension and vocabulary instructional practices in their classrooms to facilitate students' comprehension of texts, at four middle schools in a district in South Texas. Based on the results of this study, the researcher was able to draw conclusions, discuss implications for practice, and suggest recommendations.

#### **Summary of Findings**

This study was conducted to investigate whether reading comprehension and vocabulary instructional activities were being implemented in middle school 7<sup>th</sup> grade ELA/R and SS classrooms. The researcher used the TQG Classroom Observation Form (Comprehension and Vocabulary) to identify the comprehension and vocabulary instructional practices used by the 12 teacher participants, and to note the amount and percent of instructional time that teachers spent implementing these practices.

#### **Comprehension practices**

The findings of the study revealed that comprehension practices were implemented for approximately 79 minutes, about 5%, of the 1,561 minutes of observation. The most frequent comprehension practice among all 12 participants was activating prior knowledge and/or previewing text, which comprised a total of 51 minutes, 3% of the total observation time (1,561 minutes); in other words, 65% of the comprehension activities were spent on activating prior knowledge. These results demonstrate that teachers are spending minimal

time on teaching reading comprehension strategies to their students and more time on pre-reading activities, which signifies the teachers' lack of knowledge on how to teach comprehension. Additionally, if minimal time is being spent on teaching reading comprehension strategies, teachers are also failing to teach comprehension instruction for students to understand text. Research suggests that pre-reading instruction should be brief (Shanahan, 2012) and more time should be spent on teaching students the new grade-level content (Hollingsworth & Ybarra, 2009). Teachers who spend too much time on pre-reading activities prevent students from having enough instructional time to learn and retain the new content (Hollingsworth & Ybarra, 2009). Shanahan (2012) echoes the importance that preparation of reading text should focus on providing students with the tools they need to make sense of the text on their own.

The other two comprehension practices that teachers spent time on included: asking students to justify or elaborate their responses, 6 minutes, and asking questions, 22 minutes. Data from this study indicate that beginner teachers spent 67 minutes of the 786 minutes of observation of beginner teachers on comprehension practices, while seasoned teachers spent 12 minutes of the 775 minutes of observation of seasoned teachers on comprehension activities. Beginner teachers spent 39 minutes on activating prior knowledge, and seasoned teachers spent 12 minutes on the same strategy. The beginner teachers also spent 22 minutes on teacher questioning and 6 minutes on asking students to justify or elaborate their responses. When discussing the differences of the amount of time the different groups of teacher participants, beginner ELA/R, seasoned ELA/R, beginner SS and seasoned SS, taught comprehension instructional practices, information obtained from this research study revealed that beginner ELA/R teachers spent 63 minutes of the 387 minutes observed for this

group, on comprehension procedures, and that the seasoned ELA/R teachers did not implement any comprehension practices during the 389 minutes observation time for this group of teachers. The data also revealed that the beginner SS participants implemented comprehension practices only 4 minutes of the 399 minutes of observation among beginner SS teachers; the only comprehension strategy the beginner SS teachers implemented was asking students to justify or elaborate their responses. The seasoned SS participants implemented comprehension procedures for 12 minutes of the 386 minutes of observation time among seasoned SS teachers; the only comprehension strategy implemented by seasoned SS teachers was activating prior knowledge.

### **Vocabulary practices**

Vocabulary activities were implemented approximately 121 minutes of 8% of the total amount of time. The most frequent vocabulary practice was having the students do something that required knowledge of words (e.g., answer questions; define words; make sentences; find words based on clues; note word parts; use context clues; physically demonstrate meaning). This strategy was practiced by the ELA/R teachers for a total of 72 minutes, 5% of the total observation time (1,561 minutes); 60% of vocabulary practices was spent on having students answer questions about words, define words, make sentences with words, or use context clues to define words by the ELA/R teachers. The SS teachers spent 27 minutes on this practice, which comprised 2% of the total observation time (1,561 minutes); 22% of vocabulary practices was spent on having students answer questions about words, define words, make sentences with words, or use context clues to define words by the SS teachers. Data from this study revealed that teachers spent 99 minutes on the strategy of having students do something that required knowledge of words, e.g., students answered

questions about words, defined words by using prefixes or suffixes to provide definitions, used the Freyer model or context clues to define terms, or made sentences with words. About 15 minutes were spent on the strategy of providing an explanation, a definition, or example. Teachers also spent 4 minutes on elaborating or extending a definition, and 3 minutes on teaching word learning strategies. Information on the different groups spending time on vocabulary practices revealed that vocabulary practices were implemented by ELA/R teachers for 83 minutes of the 776 minutes observed time among this group, and the SS teachers implemented vocabulary activities for 38 minutes of the 785 minutes observed time among this group. The beginner ELA/R teachers implemented two minutes on providing an explanation, definition or example of a vocabulary word, less than one minute on teaching word learning strategies, and four minutes on having students do something that required knowledge of words. The beginner SS teachers implemented nine minutes on providing an explanation, definition or example of a vocabulary word, and 27 minutes on having students do something that required knowledge of words. The seasoned ELA/R teachers implemented three minutes on providing an explanation, definition or example of a vocabulary word, three minutes on elaborating or extending a definition, two minutes on teaching word learning strategies, and 68 minutes on having students do something that required knowledge of words. The seasoned SS teachers implemented less than one minute on providing an explanation, definition or example of a vocabulary word, and less than one minute on elaborating or extending a definition.

### **Training**

The questionnaire revealed that 11 of the 12 participants stated they had received reading comprehension strategy training, but it is unclear whether the training involved reading



comprehension instruction. Additionally, the participants may not have understood how to implement comprehension instruction, or believed that assessing for understanding is the same as teaching reading comprehension strategies.

The 12 teachers who participated in this study indicated they had received some type of training on reading comprehension from five different entities. These included Region Education Service Center, district-based staff development, campus-based staff development, department/faculty meetings, and college/university courses.

### **Comprehension activities vs vocabulary activities**

Based on the data, it appears that teachers spent approximately 42 minutes, about 7%, more on vocabulary practices than on comprehension activities. This could be due perhaps to teachers' understanding that vocabulary instruction is important for comprehension, however, only six teachers, half of the participants, implemented some type of vocabulary instruction during the 1,561 minutes of observation. The six teachers included three ELA/R teachers, one beginner and two seasoned, and three SS teachers, two beginner and one seasoned.

Furthermore, it was not possible to make a Chi square analysis of the frequencies and percentages associated with reading comprehension and vocabulary instruction between Reading and social studies teachers. This was due to the very few occurrences of the teachers implementing comprehension and vocabulary practices.

## **Conclusions**

### **No comprehension instruction taught**

The findings of this study indicate that comprehension instruction, teachers teaching strategies to students, was not taught by the 7<sup>th</sup> grade teacher participants during any of the

36 observations, 1,561 total minutes of observation. During most of the observations, teachers implemented comprehension-related instruction practices, such as teacher-questioning to check for comprehension. Teachers spent a minimal amount of time implementing comprehension practices. The findings are consistent with those reported by the National Reading Panel (2000). The Panel found that instead of teaching their students the skills or strategies that they could use to comprehend what they read, teachers tend to spend instructional time assigning activities, supervising and monitoring students to keep them on task, directing recitation sessions, and providing corrective feedback when students erred.

Schema theory, which serves as a theoretical foundation for this study, seems to help explain the minimal attention paid to comprehension instruction. In accordance with this principle, when teachers facilitate the process of activating students' prior knowledge, students are in a better position to apply a variety of strategies to understand text (Bransford, 2004). Evidence obtained in this study did not indicate that teachers had a deep understanding of the importance of activating their students' background knowledge in order to facilitate their students' comprehension of text. Only four teachers activated their students' prior knowledge during the time each was observed, for a combined total of 51 minutes (or 3%) of the total observation time (1,561 minutes). Furthermore, the ELA/R teachers who implemented comprehension practices were all beginner ELA/R teacher participants; they spent 39 minutes on activating prior knowledge, 22 minutes on asking questions, and two minutes on asking students to justify or elaborate their responses, for a total of 63 minutes on comprehension practices, 8% of the 786 minutes of observation among beginner ELA/R and SS teachers. None of the seasoned ELA/R teacher participants

implemented comprehension practices during the observations.

### **Beginners implemented more comprehension practices than seasoned**

For this study, teachers with 0-3 years of teaching experience were considered beginner, while teachers with 15 or more years of teaching experience were considered seasoned. According to Berliner (1988), the number of teaching years of experience does not necessarily certify that a teacher belongs in a specific stage, i.e., beginner or seasoned, since a teacher at one stage may demonstrate characteristics of another stage. Based on the results of this study, beginner and seasoned teachers implemented comprehension behaviors 4% and 1% of the total observed time (1,561 minutes), respectively. The amount of time beginner participants spent on comprehension practices exemplify some of the characteristics associated with being at the seasoned stage, whereas the seasoned participants demonstrated qualities more commonly seen at the beginner stage, as described by Berliner (1988). Even though both groups of teachers employed comprehension practices to a very limited degree, the beginner teachers spent 55 more minutes, or five times more time than seasoned teachers implementing comprehension-related behaviors, such as teacher-questioning, in their classrooms.

### **Teachers know little about comprehension**

Data from this study further indicate that both seasoned and beginner teachers did not devote any attention to modeling comprehension strategies for students. Although beginner teachers seemed to be more knowledgeable about comprehension through their replies to the interview questions, only four out of the six beginner teachers implemented any comprehension practices, 67 total minutes among all of them, during any of the times they were observed. Teachers' responses to the interview questions about comprehension

instruction revealed that Teacher 1 was the only one out of 12 participants who mentioned modeling in connection to comprehension instruction. Teacher 1 implemented 21 minutes, or 16%, of comprehension activities during the three observation visits which totaled approximately 135 minutes. These results suggest that teachers may not be aware of the modeling process or how to provide this type of instruction. The importance of modeling has been emphasized by Neufeld (2005) and Wray, Medwell, Fox, and Poulson (1999), who stress that an essential quality of an effective teacher is the ability to model reading or strategies to students, and follow the demonstrations with verbal explanations or thinking aloud for the students to gain meaningful learning. As a result, students have a greater possibility of increasing their reading comprehension skills.

### **Comprehension and vocabulary implemented minimally**

Of the eight comprehension instructional practices and the seven vocabulary practices listed on the TQG instrument, the researcher observed three comprehension strategies and four vocabulary strategies being minimally utilized by the participants. From the 36 observations conducted in this study, one-sixth of the observations revealed that participants implemented comprehension procedures, and only 11, or 31% of observations, included teachers implementing vocabulary activities as reinforcement strategies. This minimal amount of time spent on comprehension and vocabulary practices may have been influenced by teachers' inconsistent participation in long term, focused professional development training aimed at enhancing their knowledge and skills pertaining to reading comprehension and vocabulary instructional activities.

### **Professional development not transferring for instruction**

Based on the analysis of the data, it appears that the training sessions that participants

have attended on reading comprehension have not had a positive transfer effect on their customary instructional practices. Respondents reported that they had received training on reading comprehension from five different sources, i.e., Region One ESC, college/university courses, faculty/department/district training, Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol, and AP training. However, no evidence was found to indicate the degree to which these experiences were complimentary or mutually supportive of each other.

Although 11 out of the 12 teachers participated in at least one training on reading comprehension, the results from this study indicate that teachers spent minimal time on comprehension practices, 79 minutes, or 5%, of the 1,561 total minutes observed. The National Reading Panel (2000) and Penuel, et. al., (2007) concluded that teachers who participate in professional development “demonstrate improvement in their teaching” and that this improvement leads to higher student achievement. Additionally, when professional development is long-term it can be successful and have a significant impact on student learning (Allen, 2006). Furthermore, if professional development is going to be useful, it should be research-based and address effective teaching practices that will allow students to be successful (Kent, 2004).

### **Teachers lack knowledge of comprehension instruction**

Data from the interview questions provide further evidence of the teachers’ lack of knowledge of comprehension instruction in the ELA/R and SS classes. Additionally, the teachers’ replies to the questions seem to indicate that they have minimal knowledge of how to implement reading strategies for their students to become strategic readers.

In reference to naming some qualities of a good reader, the teachers mentioned qualities that can be classified into Learning to read or Reading to learn categories. The qualities

mentioned for the Learning to read category included: ability to read, accuracy when reading, understanding meaning of context, use of language, rules of grammar, knowing the difference between punctuation marks, and speaking language in text. The qualities mentioned for the Reading to learn category included: desire to learn, passion, setting a purpose for reading, predicting, pausing, recalling information, reflecting, creating mental pictures, making inferences and connections, and analyzing. Each of the qualities for the Reading to learn category were mentioned once by one of the 12 participants.

All but one of the participants did not report any kind of knowledge about describing what reading comprehension instruction entails. The sole participant that made mention of reading comprehension instruction in the classroom did not implement comprehension instruction during any of the three times that she was observed. Although this participant seemed knowledgeable in describing reading comprehension instruction, it appears that the participant does not transfer the practice of teaching comprehension instruction into her classroom. Half of the participants mentioned teacher-questioning as a way of implementing comprehension instruction in their classrooms. And only one participant made mention of modeling as a way of implementing comprehension instruction in her classroom. Although the teachers mentioned a variety of strategies they implemented in their classrooms, none of them taught any reading comprehension strategies during the classroom observations. None of the participants were able to describe a process of teaching reading strategies; instead they mentioned strategies that they use in their classrooms. Several teachers made reference to vocabulary as being the process they follow to teach reading strategies.

Data from the interview questions also revealed that only three out of the 12 participants

cited reading comprehension strategies: using context clues and questioning. All 12 participants mentioned at least one of the following as reading comprehension strategies: phonics instruction, qualities of a good reader, vocabulary knowledge, and intervention strategies. According to research, effective comprehension instruction includes the use of explicit instruction in the use of strategies designed to help students make sense of text (NRP, 2000; RAND Report on Reading Comprehension, 2002; Prado & Plourde, 2011). Teachers can provide explicit instruction through guided and independent practices for mastery and transfer of skills to other reading situations (Blair, et. al., 2007). The effects of explicit instruction with reading strategies could bring about positive results. “These children need to see these strategies modeled, they need to be led through guided practice, and finally they need to be given time to practice these strategies independently” if they are going to grow as readers (Prado & Plourde, 2011).

### **No Instruction provided to struggling learners**

Among the responses to the interview questions, the researcher noted that teachers did not appear to be providing instruction to struggling learners, as they apparently either did not include them in the daily reading activities, such as calling upon them to read, or they limited the amount of reading for these students. These responses suggest that teachers may not be monitoring the struggling readers to provide the necessary comprehension instruction needed for these students to practice their reading. Additionally, if teachers are not monitoring their students’ reading performance, they are likely unaware of their students’ reading needs (Raphael, et. al., 2008). Furthermore, if teachers are not allowing their struggling readers the opportunity to read frequently and extensively and to read materials that are on their appropriate levels of difficulty, the chances for these students to improve their fluency skills,

which facilitate comprehension, are decreased (Rasinski, Homan, & Biggs, 2009). The National Reading Panel (2000) and Prado & Plourde (2011) concluded that explicit instruction on reading comprehension strategies can lead to students' improvement in text understanding. The explicit instruction should include modeling or guiding the students to help them understand and effectively use specific strategies. "Readers who are not explicitly taught these procedures are unlikely to learn, develop, or use them spontaneously" (NRP, 2000). Students should be able to see the strategies modeled by the teachers if they are to continue to grow as readers (Prado & Plourde, 2011). Additionally, the three levels of cognitive knowledge, declarative, procedural and conditional, assist students with the use of strategies (Sungur, 2009).

### **Little change in comprehension instruction in past 37 years**

Despite the extensive research that has been conducted, along with professional development activities provided to teachers, the results of this study, and others (Spor & Schneider, 1999; Pressley, 2000; Biancarosa & Snow, 2006), indicate that very little has changed in the last 37 years in trying to improve students' comprehension of text, especially since Durkin's (1978) breakthrough research, which found that less than 1% of comprehension instruction was being implemented in the classroom. In their report that calls for action and research toward improving adolescent literacy, Biancarosa and Snow (2006) clearly state that the large number of struggling learners in reading and writing "has not changed noticeably in decades." Pressley and his colleagues (2000) "saw little comprehension instruction but many teachers posing postreading comprehension questions," in his observational study of 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade classrooms in the late 1990s. Pressley (2000) is also very clear in stating that little has been done to improve students' text comprehension.



“Sadly, just as it was a quarter of a century ago, so it is now: Students often are asked to read a text in order to answer questions designed to do little more than test whether they have understood and remembered the text read.” Dolores Durkin’s 1978 study of 4<sup>th</sup> grade classrooms demonstrated that less than 1% of comprehension instruction was occurring in the classrooms; instead, teachers were implementing other comprehension-related behaviors, such as *Comprehension: Assessment* or *Comprehension: Prediction*. In this study, the teachers’ replies to the open-ended questions revealed that they are doing minimal work, if any, regarding teaching comprehension instruction and/or implementing reading strategies for students to be able to read on-grade level. This study and other relevant research support the need for reading comprehension instruction in the ELA/R and SS classrooms (NRP, 2000; RAND Report on Reading Comprehension, 2002). Of equal importance is the need for knowledgeable teachers who can effectively implement comprehension strategy instruction with their students (Alvermann, Phelps, & Ridgeway, 2007).

### **Limitations of Study**

1. This study was limited to a single observer/researcher.
2. This study was limited to a small sample.
3. This study was limited to three observations per teacher.
4. This study was limited to one school district.

These limitations could be addressed by having more than one researcher conduct observations, having a larger sample, conducting more than three observations per teacher, and conducting the observations in more than one school district.

## **Implications for Further Research**

This study's findings have implications for school districts. It is imperative for school administrators and teachers to recognize the importance of reading comprehension instruction in the classroom. Therefore, one suggestion would be to conduct this study in more than one school district to determine if reading comprehension and vocabulary instruction are occurring in the classrooms of more than one district. The data from this study could show to what extent teachers are implementing comprehension and vocabulary instruction to facilitate students' comprehension of text. Additionally, the study could also tell if any change has occurred in the quality of teaching comprehension, when compared to this and other studies on students' ability to comprehend text.

This study could be extended to include 6<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade middle school ELA/R and SS teachers to determine if reading comprehension and vocabulary instructional activities are occurring in these classrooms. Since 8<sup>th</sup> grade is considered a Student Success Initiative (SSI) grade, it is expected for eighth graders to pass the state reading exam in order to advance to the next grade level. Therefore, the study could generate data to determine the extent to which sixth and eighth grade teachers are providing the necessary instruction and support needed by their students to make sense of their textbooks.

Another recommendation is for a similar study to be conducted to compare the strategies implemented at the elementary, middle, and high school levels and thus determine if comprehension and vocabulary instruction are occurring at these levels. According to the Texas Education Agency, fifth grade is considered a Student Success Initiative (SSI) grade, and therefore the study could provide insight as to whether fifth grade teachers are providing the necessary comprehension and vocabulary instruction to help students successfully

perform at the 6<sup>th</sup> grade.

The study at the high school level could reveal information of the extent to which teachers are providing their students with reading comprehension and vocabulary instruction to help prepare them for a postsecondary education experience. Research indicates that students entering the secondary level rarely receive reading instruction to become seasoned readers; therefore, student improvement in reading comprehension does not seem to be receiving sufficient attention for students to make progress (Edmonds, Vaughn, Wexler, Reutebuch, Cable, Tackett, & Schnakenberg, 2009).

Another recommendation is for a study to be conducted to compare the teachers' knowledge and practice between those who had college/university training or courses as opposed to those teachers who did not report having these experiences. The study could also compare the nature and/or type of professional development the teachers received, i.e., semester course, one-week workshop, or one-day session. The data from this study could show the impact or contribution of the teachers' knowledge about reading comprehension and perhaps the extent to which the teachers are providing reading comprehension instruction.

## **Recommendations**

This study was conducted to determine if 7th grade ELA/R and SS teachers implemented reading comprehension and vocabulary instructional activities, and if the teachers differed significantly in the frequency with which they used comprehension and vocabulary instructional strategies. As a result of the findings of this study and the conclusions reached, the following recommendations are suggested.

In an effort to improve student achievement, school administrators and teachers must

become informed and knowledgeable about comprehension instruction through actively participating in effective long-term professional development experiences. Research suggests that the support of administrators in the area of professional development helps promote school change (Pink & Hyde, 1992; Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, Meyerson, Orr, & Cohen, 2007).

School administrators also need to realize that reading comprehension instruction is not regularly occurring in the 7<sup>th</sup> grade ELA/R and SS classrooms. Thus, in order to provide the necessary support for teachers, school administrators can help establish a pilot mentoring program that focuses on reading comprehension instruction. Mentoring could be provided by a university professor or individual with expertise in the area of Reading. The program could involve content area teachers actively participating in professional development training aimed at helping them understand reading comprehension and vocabulary instruction, as well as how to provide it effectively to different types of students. Some characteristics of effective teacher professional development include offering the teachers a practical number of strategies to build students' literacy and provide them with the opportunity to form focus groups to discuss and implement literacy priorities for the improvement of student reading achievement (Brozo and Fisher, 2010)

It is also recommended that teachers be observed as they implement reading comprehension and/or vocabulary instruction in order to provide them support in their areas of need. Brozo and Fisher (2010) suggest that support be provided immediately in the classroom after the professional development workshop in order for instructional improvements to occur. The professional development training designed to address these issues should allow for teachers to experience "teaching" comprehension and vocabulary.

This process should involve teachers having an opportunity to observe the implementation of reading comprehension instruction and thereafter follow with their own planning and implementation of comprehension instruction in a low-risk, high-support classroom setting. Providing this type of hands-on coaching with appropriate support and feedback will allow teachers to understand more fully how comprehension instruction can be implemented in the classroom. Brozo and Fisher (2010) underscore the importance of this process and recommend varying the formats used in professional development in order for teachers to become engaged, share their knowledge, and expand their instructional repertoires. This type of training should be on-going as it can help teachers monitor student performance, as well as improve their quality of instruction. The follow-up sessions can help teachers and instructional leaders address the comprehension needs of the students.

The significance of the type of professional collaborative learning described above has been highlighted by Thibodeau (2008). She conducted a year-long study of professional learning on a collaborative study group, and found that the collaborative experience had positive effects on the teachers' knowledge and instructional practices. This experience also led to improved student achievement. Additionally, long-term collaborative professional development efforts can serve as effective professional learning options for secondary teachers implementing the different stages of teacher learning development (Thibodeau, 2008).

School district administrators should also meet with Region One Education Service Center staff to discuss the planning, organization, and implementation of training involving reading comprehension and vocabulary instruction and how long-term staff development can be designed to help teachers implement the acquired knowledge and skills in their

classrooms. The Region One Education Service Center is the largest provider of professional development according to the results of this study. As such, school administrators need to have a vested interest in the quality of the professional development provided to their teachers, in particular professional development intended to address reading comprehension and vocabulary instruction on their campuses.

The preceding information clearly indicates that professional development should meet the instructional needs of the teachers in order for the teachers to meet the needs of their students (Kent, 2004). An investment in high-quality professional development can help produce a successful literacy program and high student achievement (Brozo & Fisher, 2010).

The proposed recommendations of this study seem particularly important, since the present investigation revealed that seventh graders are not receiving comprehension instruction, though 7<sup>th</sup> grade teachers are implementing comprehension and vocabulary practices at a minimal degree. If this situation persists throughout the middle schools, then students entering high school are not likely to be properly prepared to make sense of their texts. This situation may become even more problematic if high school teachers are not providing their students with appropriate reading comprehension and vocabulary instruction intended to help them understand their texts and other materials.

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## **APPENDIX A**

### **INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

1. What are some qualities you think a good reader should have?
2. In your own words, define what reading comprehension instruction means.
3. Do you practice reading comprehension instruction? If so, describe examples of how you provide this type of instruction.
4. What are some of the reading comprehension strategies you teach in your reading class?
5. Describe the process you implement to teach students reading strategies for them to use to facilitate understanding what they read.

## APPENDIX B

### TQG Classroom Observation Form (Comprehension and Vocabulary)

---

Observer \_\_\_\_\_

Today's Date \_\_\_\_\_  
mm dd yyyy

School \_\_\_\_\_

District \_\_\_\_\_

Start time \_\_\_\_\_ a.m. p.m.

End time \_\_\_\_\_ a.m. p.m.

Class (circle one that is applicable)

Intervention      Comparison

---

	Number		Number
Maximum number of students observed in classroom	<div></div>	Maximum number of adults observed providing instruction or educational support in the classroom (including teacher)	<div></div>

---

Any special circumstances that interrupted instruction? (please explain)

**Note to Rater: Focus on Primary Teacher for rating purposes. If a student teacher is leading class, please do not observe.**

## Comprehension

Before Reading	Models	Explains, Reviews	Student Practice	Notes
1. The teacher/student activates prior knowledge and/or previews text before reading (e.g., shares background information about the title, author, content, reviews relevant content from previous lessons, picture walk, makes predictions, makes connections)				
Before, During or After Reading	Models	Explains, Reviews	Student Practice	
2. Instruction using text features (sub-heads, captions, charts, maps, graphs, sidebars, bold and italicized words) to interpret text				
3. Using text structure to teach/identify compare-contrast, cause effect, or problem-solution (may include story grammar/elements if using informational text that has a narrative structure)				
4a. Explicit comprehension instruction that teaches students how to use strategies such as, main idea, summarizing, drawing conclusions, visualizing events, evaluating predictions, identifying fact vs. opinion, sequencing, monitoring for comprehension other _____. <i>Note: Must involve instruction on “how to” do something rather than simply soliciting students to write a main idea for example.</i>				
4b. Explicit comprehension instruction that teaches students how to generate questions.				
5. Asks students to justify or elaborate their responses (e.g., teacher asks “why”, “how did you reach that conclusion” etc.)				
During or After Reading	Models	Explains, Reviews	Student Practice	

6. Teacher asks questions <b>based on text material</b> that require one of the following: (making inferences (MI), summarizing/finding main ideas (S), drawing conclusions( DC) or some other complex skill <b>indicate in notes your best guess (e.g. MI, S, DC, other)</b>				
7. Teacher elaborates, clarifies, or links concepts during text reading. May be an elaboration of student responses.				

**Vocabulary (includes concepts, terminology, ideas; may be technical or complex vocabulary)**

Instructional Strategies/Practices	Tally	Notes
1. The teacher activates prior knowledge by using before reading strategy (e.g., semantic features analysis map, word web		
2. The teacher provides an explanation, a definition, or an example. Before During After the lesson		
3. The teacher elaborates or extends a definition. May include using multiple or contrasting examples to pinpoint a definition; further developing or paraphrasing the definition by incorporating ideas from students' responses, examples, and experiences; or discussing multiple-meanings.		
4. The teacher use visuals, gestures related to word meaning, facial expressions, pictures, or demonstrations to discuss/demonstrate word meanings.		
5. The teacher teaches word learning strategies - using context clues, word parts, root meaning.		
6. Students do something that requires knowledge of words (e.g., answer questions; define words; make sentences; find words based on clues; notes word parts; uses context clues; physically demonstrates meaning).		
7. The teacher gives students opportunity to apply word learning strategies - using context clues, word parts, root meaning.		

**APPENDIX C**  
**QUESTIONNAIRE**

Directions: Please answer the following questions. Please remember that all information will be kept anonymous. Thank you for your cooperation.

1. Total number of years teaching experience (including current year): \_\_\_\_\_
2. Number of years at this middle school: \_\_\_\_\_
3. Degrees held: \_\_\_\_\_ Bachelor's \_\_\_\_\_ Master's \_\_\_\_\_ Doctorate  
Major(s):  
\_\_\_\_\_  
  
Minor(s):  
\_\_\_\_\_  
  
Teaching certificates/endorsements:  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. Areas taught:  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. Indicate if you have received training on Reading Comprehension Strategies through any of the following:

a. Region One Workshops	YES	NO
Comments:		
_____		
b. District-based staff development	YES	NO
Comments:		
_____		
c. Campus-based staff development	YES	NO
Comments:		
_____		
d. Department/Faculty meetings	YES	NO
Comments:		
_____		
e. College/university courses	YES	NO
Comments:		
_____		
6. If you received training from any of the above-types of training, which do you think influenced your teaching the most?